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COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Last Christmas—so much has happened since that it is hard to remember—the Rundstedt offensive, the heaviest armoured attack ever mounted in the West, appeared to be still unchecked. It was one of the blackest weeks of the war. To-day at least the danger of Nazi domination is over: we are no longer listening for V.2s; soldiers of many nations have ceased to kill each other in Europe; slaves are no longer dying under the lash of Nazi gang-leaders; Belsen and Buchenwald and their kind are demolished. In the Far East there is still fighting, but the Japanese war-lords no longer hold our prisoners or threaten the Pacific with the Nipponese version of prosperity. At home, though rations are strict and discomfort is great, shopping provides rather more choice, and industry, under an energetic Government, is being reconverted for the purposes of peace. We have a young, informed and earnest House of Commons, crowded, as a witty parodist remarked recently, "with smooth-faced young men who look as if they meant to do well out of the Peace." In Europe, though millions are hungry and cold (many of us would willingly share some of our rations with them), recovery is on the way in the occupied countries; and, even in Germany, we hope that at last the necessity of rebuilding on a peace basis will be recognised by the three Foreign Ministers in Moscow.

All these, it will be said, are negative blessings—freedom from defeat, slavery or death. The positive promises of freedom from want and fear, freedom from mental and spiritual shackles, are still, for most of the world, no more than high-sounding talk. Fascism still stalks abroad, and even where Socialism claims to have found the road to plenty and full employment, personal freedom is insecure. Above all, the end of the Axis threat has not ended war. Its shadow is still dark and ominous in the Atomic Age.

To have expected otherwise would have been mistaken optimism. We have never seen any reason to believe that the violent deaths of millions and the social upheavals of continents would produce any kind of Utopia. Why should they? War may end a particular menace, as this one has done; it may sweep away ancient obstructions and release new forces of good and evil. It does not divert the tendencies of history or settle the problems of morality and human relations. Fascism is a state of mind, not an Italian or German monopoly. All we can claim is that we have defeated a violent attempt to overthrow a civilisation which contains within itself the Christian ideas of human kindness and universal brotherhood. We have rejected the invitation to return to the tribal deities of power and wrath. But victory can only be achieved when we have an economic system that gives men their share of work and of prosperity and a world government which releases them from the fear of war. These are the pre-requisites of secure civilisation in our day.

A world of fear and want puts altogether too high a premium on the acquisitive, cruel and selfish aspects of man's nature. A Socialist and peaceful world is the alternative to gangsterism. We shall be often reminded, truly enough, by the preachers this Christmas that political and economic changes are not in themselves enough. Man may remain unregenerate in the best regulated world. We agree. No external change can guarantee goodness or happiness, peace or love among men. But the social and political changes are the necessary pre-requisites, the conditions within which a happier period becomes possible for suffering humanity.

Mr. Truman on China

After a rough passage in the air, Mr. Bevin and Mr. Byrnes have reached Moscow in the attempt to reach a Big Three agreement on urgent problems. The atom bomb, Persia (where Azerbaijan, with Soviet encouragement, has declared autonomy), the desperate need for a joint policy in Germany, the war in China, are only the most obvious items on the agenda. On the last of these problems, Mr. Truman has made a striking pronouncement. It amounts to a directive to General Marshall to use American influence and power in China to prevent civil war. It assumes that peace in China is not a domestic but a world issue; it recognises, as Russia has done, the sole right of the Chungking Government to rule in China, but it urges on Chiang Kai-shek the necessity of coming to terms with Yenan. The Communist areas are the best and most honestly governed in China; they have already shown that, in spite of American help to the Kuomintang, they are able to maintain a prolonged resistance as a military force, while their support all over China is such that to attempt to destroy them would mean years of chaos and civil war throughout the country. Mr. Truman can base his proposals on the fact that both Yenan and Chungking profess their desire for peace and unity. The difficulty lies in the Communists' fear that to surrender their separate army would open them to destruction by the bitterly reactionary and anti-Communist forces now in charge at Chungking, while Chungking seems unwilling to make the full social and domestic changes without which the presence of a few Communists in the Central Government would be futile. The President suggests that the chief political parties should send representatives to a national conference to agree on the formation of a properly representative system for China. This means surrendering the domination of the Kuomintang, disbanding its military dictatorship and also the secret police of Tai-li, and allowing full expression to the varying democratic forces now half-suppressed in China. By way of encouraging a change of mind within both political parties, President Truman suggests not only that the Japanese forces can in this way be ejected from China, but also that America will be willing to place large sums at the disposal of the new Central Chinese Government, and to aid in China's vast problem of reconstruction.

The Burmese Scene

The Burmese Executive Council has been appointed by the Governor. Foreign firms which carried on the trade and industry of Burma before the war are returning, in the first place, as "paid agents of Government-financed enterprise." The

Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League is not represented on the Executive Council, although two of its members were induced to leave its ranks, and turned up the following day with portfolios. The League did not approve of the method adopted by the Governor in appointing a Council and the portfolios still open for it are not likely to be accepted. Thus the one popular organisation in Burma, which is rooted in the hearts of the village people and treated by the village headmen with a great deal more respect than the newly-appointed Civil Affairs officials, (most of whom have spent the war outside the country) is gradually developing into an Opposition movement. Its Resolutions, passed at the biggest political demonstration held in Burma for many years, criticised the non-representative nature of the new Executive Council and demanded immediate general elections, based on universal suffrage, for a Constituent Assembly; civil liberties; the release of political prisoners (many people who actively resisted the Japanese are still in prison); unity for national reconstruction, and resistance to the Governor's granting of economic monopolist concessions to foreign capital, as in the case of transport between Rangoon and Mandalay. Thus British policy of co-operating in the first instance with the popular forces seems to be developing into one of reimposing the old regime. Bloodshed, as events in Indonesia and Indo-China have shown, is the probable result of such attempts. Where the anti-Fascist movement has taken over control, as in the case of the Viet-Nam Republican Government in Northern Indo-China, there is law and order; and next Sunday has already been selected for the general elections throughout the country. The moral is clear: the political awakening of the people of Asia must be recognised by the West, and no policy which fails to accept this new factor in the future of Asia can possibly succeed.

The Powers and Spain

Are the British and American Governments prepared for a complete diplomatic rupture with the Franco regime? And are they ready at this stage to accord recognition to the Republican Government of Señor Giral? These are the questions posed, by implication at least, in the French Note proposing tripartite discussions on Spain. France is still represented in Madrid by a delegate, but she has no formal Embassy there; and, in his first speech to the Assembly, General de Gaulle emphasised that "friendly relations" between France and Spain depended on Spain's becoming a democratic country once more. The U.S. State Department, whose acting head, Mr. Acheson, has been having talks in Washington with Dr. Negrin, shows no signs of sending a new Ambassador to Madrid in succession to Mr. Armour, retired. In these circumstances, the recall of the British Ambassador for consultations in London would seem to be a logical first step on Britain's part. As for the Giral Government, reconstruction on a wider basis—so as to include the Negrin Socialists, the Communists and the Left Republicans—might well be a condition precedent to its formal recognition by the Powers as the *de jure* Government of Spain; but, since some of the Government's members are already in France and Señor Giral is believed to agree with Dr. Negrin that the Cabinet could be broadened more effectively if it moved entirely from Mexico to France, the French Government naturally wants to concert with its Allies the immediate policy to be adopted towards the emigré administration.

The Site of UNO

With ornamental unanimity, Committee Eight of the Preparatory Commission has chosen the United States as the site of the United Nations Organisation. Behind the facade of agreement, however, a heated and involved dispute nearly resulted in a recommendation in favour of Europe. Although the United States kept aloof from the discussion, its intervention for an open ballot was decisive. It is known that in a secret ballot one or more of the Latin American States might have supported a European site; under the gaze of Washington, they preferred to demonstrate their loyalty to the Pan-American *bloc*. As it was, a majority of two was all that could be secured for an open ballot, which, in the circumstances, amounted to a vote for the United States site. On a direct amendment supporting the European site, two votes again turned the scale. The delegations supporting the European site then threw in their hands and eventually accepted the motion unanimously to support the location of UNO in an unspecified site in the United States, to be settled by the General Assembly when it meets in January. It is unlikely that the question of principle will be raised again; but it is worth noting that very few European countries have had the chance to give their votes. Apart from Germany and Italy, neither the former satellites of the Axis nor the neutrals are States members of UNO, and they had no say in the location of the organisation which, presumably, they will some time be asked to join. Unlike the Pan-American grouping, such Eastern European nations as were represented did not choose automatically to follow the example of their powerful neighbour. Though Russia throughout supported an American site, Poland remained one of the most steadfast protagonists of a European site until the end. The price paid for the chance of sustained American interest in UNO is remoteness of its site from most of the world's old political centres.

Plans for East Africa

Racial strife in Kenya has for long held up the whole political development of East Africa. If economic efficiency were the only criterion, the three vast neighbouring territories of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, with a total population of about 15 millions, should obviously be united. But the Africans of Uganda and Tanganyika are so suspicious of the settlers' influence in Kenya, that they have passionately opposed all schemes for closer union, and in this they have been supported by progressive opinion in Britain. Nevertheless, it was inevitable that certain common services—transport, customs, posts, defence—should cross the political boundaries, and during the war a complicated network of inter-territorial boards and committees has taken shape. The Government has now decided to give this a constitutional basis, and proposals have just been published to set up an East African High Commission. An interesting feature is that the High Commission is to consist not only of executive officers, but also of a Central Legislature representative of all the three countries—a sort of Federal Parliament (though the proposals emphatically state that there is no question of political fusion). This Parliament will meet in Nairobi, and will be composed of 12 official, and 24 non-official members. Among the non-officials, the three racial groups—Europeans, Indians and Africans—will be represented in exactly equal numbers. The Europeans are already protesting. They discern here a sinister move on the part of the Labour Government to use constitutional arrangements "as a cloak for the introduction of political principles, especially that of equality of racial capacity and responsibility," for which, they claim, the other races are unprepared. Native policy and internal affairs will still be the sole concern of the Legislative Councils of each separate territory, and there the Europeans still retain their political dominance. But it is a step forward to find the races sitting in equal numbers in the Central Legislature.

Controls and Wages

The relaxations announced last week in the control of labour apply to several million workers, who are henceforth free to choose their jobs without any legal restrictions. But, even apart from the men liable to military service, more than half of the total working force, including some millions of women, still remains within the ambit of the Essential Works Order, and the full powers of direction are to be retained indefinitely for men up to 51 in building, civil engineering, and agriculture, and for six months in the case of nurses up to 41. The intention seems to be that the Essential Works Order shall be gradually curtailed in scope by the withdrawal of one industry after another from its range. There will be big problems in connection with this process; for the Essential Works Order confers benefits, such as the guaranteed week, as well as obligations, and it will have to be settled in each industry how far the benefits are to be retained when the obligations lapse. Behind the whole issue of "labour control" is, of course, the much larger problem of reconciling freedom for the worker to choose his job (and for the employer to choose his workmen) with the maintenance, when "direction" lapses, of the requisite supplies of labour for the various industries and services. This, in turn, is bound up with the relative wages and conditions offered in different employments and with their less measurable attractions, such as prospective immunity from unemployment, and also social prestige—this last by no means a negligible factor. If we are to have planned production without labour controls, we must have planned wages and conditions that will induce the right number of persons to apply for the various kinds of jobs. This cannot be left to the higgling of the market, or the luxury trades will outbid those providing indispensable goods. There can be no complete abandonment of labour controls without a conscious and deliberate wage policy. Probably Mr. Isaacs has gone as far as it is possible for him to go in the absence of such a policy: there are big difficulties ahead, if he starts de-controlling one industry after another and still no general wage policy emerges.

The Lords and the Loan

The debate in the House of Lords added little of substance to the arguments presented in the Commons for and against the Washington Agreement. Interest centred naturally on the speech delivered in defence of the loan by Lord Keynes. His advocacy of the pact was by no means unqualified: he expressed deep regret that the loan was not interest-free, and that, in deference to Congress opinion, there had been attached to the pact certain conditions "more cut and dried than we believed to be wise." On the other hand, he scouted the suggestion that Britain could have carried on by relying exclusively on the patience and good will of her sterling area creditors. From the American standpoint the loan (not forgetting the liquidation of all residual Lend-Lease obligations) was generous; and though he did not minimise the risks involved for Britain in so rapid a return to multilateral trade and free exchange dealings, he sought consolation in the fact that "all responsible people in the United States had departed from the high tariff, export-subsidy policy." The event will show how far Lord Keynes' confidence in American liberalism is warranted. For the time being, subject to the concurrence of Congress, the die is cast. The next move on the British Government's part will have to be negotiations for adjustment of our debts to sterling creditors.

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PARLIAMENT: Post Mortem

EXHAUSTED by last week's debate, the House has contented itself with tidying up for the Recess and discussing in the lobbies the consequences of the Tory split. Seen in retrospect, Mr. Churchill's conduct is explicable only in terms of "the other place." It is rumoured that both he and his closest advisers, Sir John Anderson and Anthony Eden, wanted to vote for the loan. But they soon realised that they could not carry their own Party. The back-benchers—and particularly the many new Members, back from active service—were implacably anti-American; and their sentiments were not qualified by any sense of responsibility. Convinced that decent people like themselves could have secured far better terms in Washington, they were damned if they would actively assist the Socialists to sign away the Empire to the blasted Americans. The ex-members of the Coalition might feel themselves morally bound by their past acts; but their leadership ever since the King's speech had brought nothing but disappointment. And anyway, most of the new Tory Members disliked the Coalition. Indeed, Mr. Churchill must have realised, even before the debate began, that hardly a score of his own supporters would follow him into the Government lobby. Reluctantly, therefore, he agreed to permit a free vote and merely advised his back-benchers to follow the Front Bench in abstaining.

Then came the debate itself—and with it a new difficulty. In order to carry the Labour Party, the Government spokesmen all deliberately stressed the hardness of the bargain, and the duress under which it was signed. Each successive Labour speech made abstention by either side more cowardly, and exacerbated the suppressed resentments of the Tory back-benchers. By Thursday afternoon, it was fairly obvious that, without further pressure, most Tories would use a free vote to express their dislike of the Government and the Americans. But then, where would Lord Cranborne be? If Conservatives in the Commons were permitted a free vote against the Government, by what right could he prevent their Lordships from venting their feelings in the same way? This alone explains Mr. Churchill's fatal decision to wash his Party linen on the floor of the House. At the last moment, he tried to withdraw the free vote and enforce abstention—in order to avert a crisis in the House of Lords. Under the strain, the Party broke to pieces. Peter Thornycroft and Quintin Hogg ostentatiously removed themselves from the Front Bench and associated themselves with the rebels who accused Mr. Churchill of double-crossing them. On Thursday evening the era of Churchillian ascendancy ended in disaster more sudden and ignominious than the collapse of Lloyd George. Five months after the election, Conservatism was a broken and battered hulk, without a rudder or pilot—and with a crew in mutiny against the skipper.

Compared with these disastrous happenings, the Government's troubles were insignificant. Apprehensions about the liberties of conscience accorded to the Party were proved to be completely groundless. Rebellion which earns no martyr's halo has few attractions to a Party schooled in Opposition to Tory government and its own Front Bench. Moreover, the Government had wisely refused to sugar the pill, and Ernest Bevin rammed it down with such monumental common sense that the patient voted in the certainty that anything which tasted quite so nasty must be real medicine.

The vote of Censure proved the parliamentary mastery exerted by the Government Front Bench when things are going well. Last week's debate showed the astonishing toughness of the Party under serious strain. Those Tories who last August were already anticipating a Labour split, followed by the formation of a National Government, are beginning to realise that this new Labour Party has provided the only possible National Government. Mr. Churchill and his associates are the living ghosts of a glorious Coalition. Mr. Thorneycroft, Mr. Hogg and the newcomers, refusing to live in a past which has gone for ever, face the future with a belly full of passions but with no policy. They cast envious eyes at Clem Davis' compact little band of Liberals. They, at the moment, are the only constructive Opposition outside the Labour Party.

PHINEAS

APRÈS M.O.I. . . .

THE decision to close the Ministry of Information will be popular both with the press and with the public. No one likes propaganda, even in wartime, and everyone criticises it because on this subject no one fails to think himself expert. In peacetime, a Labour Government, which retained what would inevitably be called "its own propaganda machine," would lay itself open to constant sniping; and much of it would be legitimate sniping. It was inevitable, therefore, that the Prime Minister, however good the technical arguments for its preservation, would refuse to reverse the decision of the Coalition Government to dispense with the M.o.I.

But this decision in fact decides surprisingly little. The King is dead: long live the King! The jobs which the Ministry of Information has been doing during the war will most of them have to be done, though on a smaller scale, in peacetime. No one seriously pretends, for instance, that the Film Unit, responsible for some of the best documentaries in the world, should be liquidated. Equally no one who knows anything of Europe or the Commonwealth argues that we should abolish foreign broadcasting merely because we developed it during the war and for specific wartime needs.

It is difficult now to remember how miserable the Government information services were in the years before the war. The Public Relations Officers of the various Departments had established themselves gradually since 1918. Each one worked on his own, and too many of them conceived it as their chief duty to provide, not information about their Departments, but publicity for their Ministers. The Post Office had experimented with documentary films. The B.B.C. had begun its Empire Service on a small scale. Overseas, the Foreign Office was beginning to appoint press attachés and the British Council was putting over its own peculiar picture of the British way of life. The Government had not at its disposal even the technical services, far less the skilled staff, for the collection and dissemination of information. When Mr. Chamberlain returned from Godesberg, it was felt desirable to try to ensure that the full text of his broadcast was made available to the German people. But how was it to be done? Someone thought of broadcasting. But who would translate and speak the broadcast? A *Daily Express* cartoonist, who happened to know German, was rushed to Broadcasting House. On a couple of weak wavelengths, the tepid message trickled into Germany. The European service was born!

Broadcasting was the most sensational of our wartime experiments in Government-controlled information. Much less is known of the M.o.I. organisation for servicing news and feature material to the press and periodicals of the world. The British Information Service in America was an outstanding example of the use of this medium of publicity; and who can argue that it was merely a wartime expedient which has been rendered unnecessary by the defeat of Germany and Japan? Equally successful has been the organisation by the M.o.I. and the Political Warfare Executive, first, of leaflet distribution, including daily newspapers and magazines behind the enemy lines, and then, in the liberated countries, of illustrated magazines, readers' digests and books. These services should no doubt be reduced in peacetime, but it is as difficult to argue for their elimination as it is to admit the possibility of closing down the Film Section of the Ministry.

Quite apart from the technical excellence of their productions, the wartime information services also evolved valuable methods of consumer research. At home this work was done by the wartime social survey, attached to the M.o.I.; abroad, by specially trained intelligence units, working either for the Ministry or for the psychological warfare units attached to the Anglo-American armies. Careful study of listener reaction to broadcasts and of reader reaction to the printed word was found to be as important to a Government information service as to commercial firms. It is noticeable that the British Council, which resolutely refused to adopt such new-fangled devices, remained for this reason as comically out of touch with its public as it was before the war.

An enormous lot has been learnt as the result of these wartime expedients. It has been found by bitter experience that it is essential to keep separate the men responsible for the technique production of publicity from the men responsible for its policy. A firm which wishes to advertise its goods puts the matter in the hands of an advertising agency, staffed by technical experts, and does not interfere with their work once it has told them what their task is. So, too, a Government Department, once it has laid down the policy, must leave the technical production to an organisation specially charged with the task. The European Service, for instance, received its policy directive from the Foreign Office, but the Foreign Office was never permitted to interfere in the detailed work of preparing broadcasts. The Ministry of Fuel and Power wants a film to stimulate miners in the Forces to return to the mines after the war. Very good. Once it has laid down its requirements, the Film Section must be left to do the job. An equally important principle has been the unification of all media in a single organisation overseas. It is fatal to permit rival organisations like the British Council and the M.o.I. to compete in a single country; or to allow films to be run by one department, publications by another, broadcasting by another, and press services by someone else. For overseas work the only efficient formula is that in each country there should be one office under a single head, responsible for all media of publicity; and this office must also be charged with overall responsibility for consumer research.

A peacetime Government information service must be firmly based on the fruits of wartime experience. Unfortunately, the decision to shut down the M.o.I. makes it likely that responsibility will be divided between a number of separate and competing bodies. It is no secret that ever since last summer a battle royal has been waged over the dying body of the Ministry. Everyone on the job—writers, broadcasters, production men—are agreed that the only sensible set-up would be a single central production agency, constructed on the same lines as the Ministry of Information, and responsible both for home and for overseas publicity. But the Foreign Office wants to achieve what it failed to achieve during the war—the absorption of overseas publicity. It wants to take over the relevant sections of the M.o.I. in London; and to attach the publicity experts overseas either to the Embassy staff or to the British Council. Meanwhile, Broadcasting House is equally anxious to remove all the overseas broadcasting services from Government control. If the Foreign Office and the B.B.C. have their way, then everything achieved during the war will be destroyed. The British Council will take over the overseas functions of the M.o.I., or share them with the press attachés. In London the Foreign Office will attempt to set up its own technical production section. Meanwhile, overseas broadcasting will languish under the B.B.C. hierarchy; and on the home front the Departmental Press Officers—freed from the central control of the Ministry—will reassert themselves as publicity agents for the various Ministers.

To prevent this the Cabinet should accept the principle of a single United Kingdom information service for home and overseas, and should take over large sections of the Ministry as they stand. It should give the Foreign Office as much influence over this central production unit as any other Government Department, but refuse it any

control of production. To ensure this, the British Council should be absorbed into this central agency, just as its representatives abroad should be absorbed in each country into a single information service.

The problem of broadcasting is the most ticklish of all. When the Charter comes up for revision, the Government will have to consider very seriously whether a Corporation, whose officials ostentatiously parade their refusal to accept any kind of Government direction, should retain a monopoly of the most important instrument of persuasion. Meanwhile, some interim policy must be evolved which can save the European and Overseas services from complete absorption into Broadcasting House. After all, these Services are almost exclusively paid for by a Government grant. In return, the Government could not unreasonably demand that their controllers should be appointed by agreement between the B.B.C. and the Prime Minister.

These proposals give no easy or simple pattern for our peacetime publicity. In this field simple solutions are impracticable. The test of success is whether, while cutting down drastically on the expense, we retain in peacetime those features of our wartime propaganda which gave British news and information a prestige among ordinary people all over the world which they never enjoyed before.

THE FINNISH OUTLOOK

I ARRIVED in Finland six weeks ago, to discover that I was the first Anglo-Saxon correspondent to stay in the country for any length of time since the armistice period. Americans who have been here during the last year came only on a fleeting visit, and it was not until a few hours before they left that they made contact with those forces in Finland which took the most active part in opposition to the Nazis. Yet it is those very elements which now are struggling to take control of Finland's future life, and upon whose success is going to depend her orientation in world affairs. Finns who have risked their own liberty and their lives to help Allied victory in the dark days of German domination have noticed that unofficial neglect with pain.

Finland is still in a dim-out—political and economic as well as electrical. The darkened streets of Helsinki at night are not over safe. Displacement from Karelia and air-raids have left thousands homeless, hungry and desperate. Finnish industry and transport are run almost entirely upon wood, and lubricated partly by an oil derived from pinewood. Finland is burning her exports through lack of coal, to maintain industry and transport at about 60 per cent. of capacity, and to pay Russia the indemnities.

These difficulties cut deep into Finnish life, which combines two economic systems. There is the "white" system of regulation, which includes rationing and price and wages controls—this being the attempt of the Government, composed strangely of the Left parties and the Agrarians, to steer the ship through difficult straits. The Communists, with key economic positions in the Administration, have sought to increase wages. But higher wages (from which some skilled workers, intellectuals, and Government officials have not benefited), together with the high, but now fixed, farm-prices upon which the Agrarians have insisted, and the absence of almost anything in the shops that one can buy legitimately, have caused prices to soar in the black market—which is all that is left in Finland of *laisser faire*.

It is not these economic considerations which cut the deepest rift in Finnish life. Economically the Finn has become fatalistic and hopes for the best. A recent mitigation from the Russian side of the length of period for the discharge of indemnities has increased hopes of an earlier resumption of Finland's western trade, partly on the basis of dollar credits. In one sense, the existence of reparations holds the country economically together; the Left wants to work off the indemnities, in the spirit of paying damages properly due to Russia for an unwarranted attack, and the employers want to get rid of their burden for the sake of a return to "normality."

But these practical considerations, which hold the country together as regards industry, divide it politically on the question of war guilt. And there the rift is very deep. It is over a year since Finland went out of the war, but her political life is still more than tinged by those influences which induced her to take up arms against Russia again in 1941. And it seems that those who opposed this adventure, whether from the beginning or towards its end, are determined to extirpate those influences as a first condition of a free democracy in the Western pattern, such as Finland had never really known.

The trial of members of the Government which is accused of having hoodwinked Finland into joining Hitler against Russia, has been long delayed, mainly by the collection of evidence needed from Germany. It is not a matter of sentencing anybody to death; the law provides no such penalty, and had it done so—so different is the case of Ryti and his colleagues from that of Quisling—there would doubtless have been popular misgivings. The nation feels it on its conscience that Parliament must actually have known many of the vital facts which the former Government is accused of withholding from it—for instance, that German troops had been allowed to land in Finland in May 1941. As in Norway, there were extremes of black and white in Finnish political life, but, in contrast to Norway, a large part of it was grey. Death sentences would undoubtedly be regarded as "scapegoating."

The nearest thing to a Resistance movement in Finland is the Popular Democratic League, which has become a powerful force in Finnish political life. It represents almost exactly one quarter of Parliament, another quarter consisting of Social Democrats, and another quarter of Agrarians. This League, after the second armistice, was theoretically open to anyone, irrespective of party, who wished to identify himself with a policy genuinely democratic and anti-Nazi. In practice it consists of Communists, who form the majority, and Social Democrats who have left their party in order to join it.

This League stands for what I have heard called "political definition"—that is, for the elimination of "greys" from the political picture, and for wholehearted and close co-operation with Russia, while not excluding co-operation with the Western Democracies. It has the support of more than a quarter and probably of half the country and is strong especially among Social Democrats and Swedish Finns, who do not think it necessary to desert their own parties to express their support. If it has reached its present strength somewhat late in the day, that is partly because the Communist Party in Finland had been proscribed for fifteen years before the second armistice, and its leaders, unlike, for instance, the Danish and Norwegian Communist leaders, were in prison.

Were it not for the fact that the Social Democratic party is due to have a congress next April, on the agenda of which the whole question of war guilt within the party will be first in importance, there is no doubt that there would by now have been many more desertions from the Party to the League. For inside the Party the influence of Tanner, although he was deposed personally, is still strong. Tanner is as wholeheartedly anti-Russian as ever, and openly so. But his support inside the Parliamentary Party is traceable to the fact that delegates to the last Party congress were appointed during the course of the second campaign.

Tanner is now among those on trial, and feeling about him inside the Party runs very high. Anti-Tannerites in the Party and Social Democrats of the League judge him much more severely than they judge his hitherto supporters, on the grounds that he misled them on foreign policy, and that it was easy to mislead a Finnish member of Parliament on foreign policy, partly because most members can only read Finnish. It is perfectly true that Swedish Finns, and Finnish Finns who understand Swedish, showed themselves capable, throughout the campaigns, and especially towards the end of the second campaign, of taking other advice than that of the Government which attacked Russia. Very noticeable also now in Finland is the greatly improved relationship between the country's two races, thanks in large measure to the new importance of the Swedish Finns as a link between Finland and the outside world.

Against her economic and human losses Finland can offset a gain in democracy. The Communist Party, which had always been potentially stronger than its counterparts in the other Northern countries, is now free to express itself politically, even if, like other Parties, it tends to lose ground to the Social Democrats. One cannot judge whether Finland would actually have taken a different course during the last five or seven years had the Communists been able to make their influence felt in Parliament. For there was another factor in Finnish political life before and during the campaigns which caused Finland to differ from a more freely functioning democracy, such as Norway or Denmark. That was the existence of a powerful clique of what Dickens called "military young gentlemen," which emerged from the universities strong enough to make a military career practically impossible for anyone who did not wish to conquer Russian Karelia and even part of northern Norway and Sweden for Finland. The students' Academic Karelian Association, as anti-Swedish as it had been anti-Russian, was its training ground. This has now been disbanded, and the Junto has disappeared. On the tables of the Akademiska Bokhandel, which had been its principal purveyor of German military literature (of which it had had the finest collection outside Germany), *Pravda* and the *Times Literary Supplement* now lie happily side by side. The army is being cleansed of Nazi elements, and it is believed the Russians want it to be maintained at pre-war strength.

Attitude towards the Russians in Finland is largely a matter of age groups. The older generation, to which Paasikivi and Mannerheim belong, and which still speaks Russian, is well disposed towards them. The younger generation, impressed by the correctness with which the Russians have behaved—and which history books had not always taught them to expect—are inquisitive. The middle-aged, who formed their opinions during and after the Revolution, are on the whole inclined to be sceptical. Agreement on one thing is general: the Russians are no longer to be regarded as bearded, boisterous, or comic, and it is only old people, or those influenced by them, who think of them as "delightful children." The Russians have, without doubt, gained everyone's respect in Finland. And one very important point in this new attitude is that, when reparations have been paid off, there is a general expectation that Russia will need to go on importing from Finland those very goods which Finland is now supplying to her free. Stalin told the Finnish cultural delegation which visited him recently that Russia might want even two or three times the present deliveries each year. It should not be impossible for Finland to satisfy such Russian requirements, for meanwhile she is becoming industrialised and training skilled workers.

Until the Revolution Finland did a large trade with Russia, but mainly in wood from the port of Vipuri. With the Revolution Finland lost this trade, which was stopped from the Russian side, and its loss gave a special zest to Finnish dislike for "Bolshevism." Its restoration is bound to have an affect upon feeling in Finland towards Russia.

ERIC DANCY

PROVINCIAL DIARY

In Manchester and Liverpool they welcome the visitor from the South with a sense of normality. Of course, they have been blitzed; of course, food is short; of course, there are queues; but the food is not so short, or the queues so long. And just as, when you went North during the war, the war seemed farther away, so now the problems of the post-war world seem less pressing. Men do sometimes talk about something other than the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. and the Loan and Yugoslavia and Hungary and Germany and the atomic bomb. They talk, of course, about housing and demobilisation, but they also on occasion permit their conversation to stray into those realms where the minds of civilised men used to dwell; into books and science—not applied—and philosophy and pictures and music. I would like to put it on record that I have heard better talk these last weeks in the Reform Club at Manchester and the University Club at Liverpool than in Common Rooms at Oxford and Cambridge or at dinner parties in London. One senses a zest and vitality that the more exhausted South lacks; one senses also the reforming of community. These northern societies seem to have got more quickly off the peacetime mark than we have done in the south and to be already moving towards a new cultural synthesis. It would not surprise me if Manchester — or should it not, rather, be Liverpool?—were to resume that special place—"leadership" Manchester would call it—in the cultural life of England occupied before 1914 by the Manchester of Scott and C. E. Montague and Miss Horniman.

* * *

This emphatically cannot be said of Oxford. Here, in the middle of the first term of peace, I got the impression of an inchoate, still largely liquid mass, which is only beginning to crystallise into patterns not yet revealed. Plain living and high thinking are the order of the day; plain living, because there are few college servants and no more food at Oxford than elsewhere. In fact, rather less; with the result that every morning streams of undergraduates can be seen crossing the quadrangle to breakfast in Hall with a plate of butter, the week's ration, in one hand, and a pot of marmalade, the month's ration in the other. High thinking, because apart from the medical students and the scientists, only those who have won scholarships and exhibitions are exempted from calling up. (A curious commentary, I thought upon the condition of our world, that in order to gain the advantages of a university education you must be exceptionally intelligent, *unless* you are engaged in one of the disciplines designed either more effectively to save life or more effectively to organise its destruction, in which events you can afford to be of normal intelligence). Any positive trends? I can see none. A crowded meeting which I addressed—all undergraduate meetings, I am told, are crowded—was earnest, puzzled and, I thought, embarrassingly respectful. It just listened to what I and the other speakers told it with a receptiveness which it would have been difficult to imagine before the war. There are hints that we are due for another of the periodical Oxford Movements. I hope not!

* * *

The Lake District in mid-November. Two hotels and a farmhouse, all three well known and all three empty. One of the hotels was the Angler's in Ennerdale, which occupies the best situation of any known to me in England. The windows look out over the waters of Ennerdale, loveliest and most meditative of the Lakes, to the great hills that enclose the valley-head nine miles away. Its walls are lapped by the waters of the Lake. It has been for years a loved and valued haunt. Now, like all beautiful things, it is threatened. Before the war West Cumberland was a badly depressed area. Already there is unemployment and queues form outside the Exchanges at Maryport and Whitehaven. Industry is being encouraged by the Government to settle in what is now called a "Special Area" and Courtauld's are proposing to establish an artificial silk factory at Sellafield. For this they need pure water and Ennerdale's, they say, is the purest in the world. But, in order that this water may be made available, the level of the Lake is to be raised five feet. Result, roads, huts, caravans, bulldozers, a concrete dam and all the panoply of progress. Result, also, the disappearance of the Angler's and of the first-rate farming land that skirts the Lake. Progress they say, must go on; yet some of us, thank God, are still to be found who do their best to stop it and, with God's help, may yet succeed. This does not mean, of course, that we do not wish ladies to have silk stockings. What it means is either (*a*) that the silk stockings could be made at another factory; or (*b*) that the water for *this* factory could be obtained from another source. Detailed proposals have, indeed, been put forward to this end.

* * *

Blenheim Palace—is it the second or is it the third in size of England's country houses? It extends over three acres, home of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough now confined to about a quarter of the whole, the rest being parcelled out between the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the ladies of the British Council under the direction of Mr. John Betjeman. We walked through the park, surely one of the loveliest in England, Betjeman explaining how Sir John Vanbrugh designed and "Capability" Brown finished it.

What amplitude, what grandeur, what space or, rather, what waste of space; for that, as Betjeman pointed out, was the aspect of Blenheim that most struck the mind of the twentieth century, as exemplified by the men and women who drove their lorries to its doors. What, they wanted to know, did a man want with all that room? And what about cleaning and heating? No difficulty, though, in heating the dreadful huts in which the ladies of the British Council performed their duties. Incongruous but warm, the huts nestled right up against the majestic portals of the Palace; the twentieth century's typical comment upon the splendours of the eighteenth. We cannot, of course, create beauty, but we cannot always bring ourselves to destroy out of hand the beauty that has come down to us. What, short of destruction, we can do and do, is to "cock a snook" at it, thus reassuring ourselves with our little huts, so beastly yet so warm, against the feelings of discomfort that austere grandeur engenders in us. "The huts," you say, "are temporary and transitional." Perhaps, yet the twentieth century will be remembered for its huts, as the eighteenth is remembered for its Blenheims.

* * *

A country house in Wiltshire; two servants where there were seven; one and a half gardeners where there where six. But it is not only the times which are inimical to the tastes of country gentlemen; nature herself seems in league with the times. Country gentlemen, for example, like to shoot pheasants; but these, it seems, cannot maintain themselves unless they are watched and protected. The stoats eat their eggs and other birds, biologically more adapted to the English environment, eat their food. After six years of war, then, there are few pheasants and, what there are, very wild. Country gentlemen, again, like to catch trout; but unless the trout are removed from the unrestricted incidence of the struggle for survival by the artificial elimination of their competitors, they also, it seems, are unable to maintain themselves. In peacetime, accordingly, the river was constantly dredged for pike and perch and roach and other enemies and competitors of the trout. Since the war, the practice of dredging has been intermitted, with the result that there is a great scarcity of trout.

It is sometimes said that our age has lost the sense of quality. Whether this is so or not, quality is universally penalised at the expense of quantity. My host kept a herd of pedigree Jerseys; expensive to buy, expensive to maintain, expensive to protect. Their milk yield, comparatively small in quantity, is of the best quality, containing a high percentage of butter content. Nevertheless, the guaranteed price at which the Government is prepared to purchase milk is no higher for the Jerseys than it is for the Friesians of the neighbouring farm—quantitative yield very high, but quality of milk, measured by butter content relatively low. One has to be a rich man these days to be able to maintain a herd of Jerseys.

* * *

Finally, the railways. We remember, of course—when are we given a chance to forget?—the shortage of staff, the number of passengers carried, the obsolescence of rolling stock, the wonderful job the railwaymen did in the war and all that; but reminding myself of these things to the full extent of my powers of reminiscence, I still cannot resist the temptation of asking, do they constitute a sufficient reason why the railway service should be so frustratingly, so heart-breakingly, so unbelievably, bad as it is; the trains so slow, so crowded, so dirty and so late, and the porters and officials so uninformative, so touchy and so irritable? Which line is the worst? One is tempted to say whichever one happens to be travelling on at the moment—always with the honourable exception of the Southern. Yet, when all is said that can be said of the squalors and bottlenecks of the L.N.E.R. or the trains from the north which crawl complacently into Euston hours late at one or two o'clock in the morning, I would myself award the palm to the G.W.R., that once proud and dignified line which in my time was the *beau idéal* of every railway-conscious schoolboy. For years before the war the G.W.R. had lost its lead; in the war it lost its head; now it has lost heart as well. And never more catastrophically than in the Didcot-Oxford region. . . . The good old 4.45 which used to reach Oxford at 6 o'clock is now scheduled to arrive at 6.10 and, in fact, gets there any time after 6.30—nearly two hours for sixty-three miles.

And when it did get there, did we not stand for another thirty-five minutes on the platform gazing helplessly at the little train that was to take us on another four miles to Yarnton? There it stood in its siding, two lines away. It had only to travel a hundred yards up the line and then shunt back to our platform. Nothing to impede its movement, neither fog, frost, passage of troops, or enemy action; nothing but inefficiency and complacency.

"What's the matter now?" I asked the porter. "Why doesn't that train come in?"

"Lor, bless you, sir," he said, "Where was you raised? That train never has left less than half an hour late not these six years past!"

C. E. M. JOAD

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to Mrs. R. Davies.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Thomas Seabourne, seventy-year-old haulier at the Nine Mine Point Colliery, near Blackwood, Mon., recently consumed this meal at a club for a bet:

One pair of worsted socks, half a pound of candles, half a pound of bacon and a few shirt buttons all boiled together until they became liquid. —*Sunday Pictorial.*

Six Barrow-in-Furness gravediggers have begun an unofficial strike for higher wages because, in the words of one of them, they were being "worked to death" in the cemetery.—*Manchester Guardian.*

1,000 Full size rubber bayonets, actually used in mock battles at Aldershot (ideal kiddies' presents), 4s. 6d. each.—Advert. in *County Express.*

NATURE RESERVES

AMONG the more encouraging omens for the future is an increased interest in nature which, ever since the publication of the Report of the National Parks Committee in 1931, may be said to have extended to official circles. These parks are intended essentially for recreation, but the present war has seen a growing demand for the establishment of nature reserves where the wild life of Britain can be conserved and studied. Long restraint of much of the population within the unnatural confines of industrial cities has awakened a keen longing in many for the beauty and peace of the countryside. Many town dwellers, and particularly children, evacuated to the country found in themselves an unexpected interest in nature which they are loath to lose and, so far as the children are concerned, the community should see that they do not lose it.

Love of nature is fortunately unlikely to die out in a race which produced naturalists so diverse as the gentle Gilbert White, the endearing eccentric figure of Charles Waterton and the austere Philip Henry Gosse who induced our Victorian forebears to keep aquaria and made shore-collecting a fashionable pursuit. The organised activities of local natural history societies, it is true, failed to maintain their attractions against the competition of the cinema and of mechanical hobbies. But a wide interest in nature is revealed by the popularity of the delightful books of naturalists such as Fraser Darling and Lockley, while ornithology flourishes as never before.

At the same time academic biology is coming out into the open air of nature from which it largely retreated into the laboratory after the appearance of the "Origin of Species." Nothing would have grieved Darwin, a supreme field naturalist, more than the knowledge that one effect of his work would be to drive zoologists for two generations into the almost exclusive study of structure and development in their search for proof of the occurrence of evolution. The first reaction from this was towards the study of function and from that, not unnaturally, to a revival of interest in the activities of animals in nature. Here zoologists joined hands again with the botanists in the building up of a common science of ecology, in the study, that is, of the conditions of existence of wild life in the countryside, in rivers and lakes and on the shores and in the sea.

The period since the last war saw not only a great advance in marine biology which, thanks in part to the problems of the great fishing industry, had an earlier start, but the establishment both by the Freshwater Biological Association and by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of freshwater laboratories. There general inquiries into the basic conditions of freshwater life have proceeded alongside studies of the effect and control of pollution. The improvement of our rivers and lakes as sources of beauty and healthy recreation has been actively sought.

The basic work on land ecology has been done by the botanists and their major results are recorded in Professor A. G. Tansley's great volume on "The British Islands and their Vegetation." On land, major problems cannot be adequately tackled from a few centres as they can in the sea and in freshwaters. There is a complex interplay of forces, of climate, soil, vegetation and fauna, which varies greatly in different regions. There is also the influence of man. Little of England, although rather more of Wales and Scotland, is unaffected by his activities. Neither hill pasture nor deciduous forest is "natural" and the work of the Forestry Commission in replacing former deciduous forests by coniferous trees is far from representing a return to natural conditions. Although animals are fundamentally dependent on vegetation, the plants themselves are influenced in countless ways by animals, as in the carriage of their seeds, in pollination, in control of numbers and in soil fertility. The delicate balance of animal populations depends on a nice equilibrium between predators and prey.

It fortunately happens, therefore, that at a time when even officialdom has begun to realise the significance of nature and when all recognise the importance of country as well as of town planning—or rather the intimate association between the two—British biologists are in a position to offer advice based on a sound and ever-growing body of knowledge. A few examples will indicate the complexities of the problems involved. There is an apparently reasonable demand for the abolition of hedgerows and small woods in the interests of more intensive agriculture. But, apart from its effect on the beauty of the countryside, this would destroy many of the smaller birds which control the insect pests of crops. An important factor in the prevention of wind and water erosion would also be removed. The activities of the gamekeeper have been concentrated on the destruction of predatory birds and mammals (other than the fox). Native and imported game birds have flourished, although the effect of over-population has sometimes defeated its object by the appearance of grouse-disease, but the destruction of their enemies has had a similar effect on the numbers of mice, voles and other rodents. These do immense damage to seedling trees. On the other hand, a moderate population of these animals is ecologically desirable in certain areas. The red squirrel is a charming animal, but the harm it does to conifers is only exceeded by that done by the introduced grey squirrel. Control, that is, regulation not destruction, is here required as it is in the case of rabbits and certain birds, such as wood pigeons and starlings, which in their present numbers are undoubted pests.

These and many related matters are discussed in a useful report of the British Ecological Society* which had before it the previous findings of the Nature Reserves Investigation Committee, a semi-official body set up by Sir William Jowitt. The voice of science has in this instance strongly approved the bulk of the official report. This recommended, amongst other things, the institution of National and Local Nature Reserves, the former to be controlled by the State, the latter by local authorities. In this way it is hoped that areas covering representative types of British vegetation and animal life and local areas of especial interest including, for instance, the breeding areas of rare animals and plants, will be permanently conserved. This demands more than mere passive "protection." Population densities must be carefully controlled and so must vegetation by grazing, mowing, burning and felling. At the same time active ecological research should be continued in all areas. Such work demands highly trained personnel and the formation of a National Wild Life Service, on somewhat the same lines as in the United States, is advocated. The subject has been further treated in the Report on National Parks, prepared by John Dower (H.M. Stationery Office, 1945), in which detailed recommendations are made for the use or treatment of Nature Reserves in relation to, National Parks.

By such methods the triple objectives of amenity, education and scientific research could be attained. Of these not the least important is the second. Only half of our aims will be attained if the future population of these islands is unable adequately to appreciate the beauties of scenery and the diversity of wild life it is hoped to perpetuate. The first step is to train the teachers. Here a promising move has been made by the recent foundation of the Council for the Promotion of Field Studies, which aims at the foundation throughout the country of Field Study Centres. Here students from Universities, Training Colleges and schools as well as amateur naturalists will be instructed in the intelligent appreciation and care of wild life. Already the first centre, Flatford Mill in Suffolk, has been rented from the National Trust, and prospects of further developments are encouraging. There are on foot movements to revivify and co-ordinate the work of local natural history societies in preparation for an anticipated renewal and wider extension of their former activities.

In comparison with other objectives, such as housing, social security, foreign trade and the like, these matters may appear of but minor importance. But they are, nevertheless, of the very essence of civilisation and of an intelligently directed life in a decent world. C. M. Y.

* *Nature Conservation and Nature Reserves.* Cambridge University Press. 1s. 6d.

HORSES EAT—DON'T THEY?

ONCE upon a time, two social workers thought it would be nice to set up a disabled ex-serviceman in a small business. They scanned the book of words and, to their great joy, found the British Government was prepared to give up to £150 to any worthy individual who fitted into categories A or B. The hearts of the two social workers warmed to that official benevolence, for Mr. X seemed to fit like a glove into category B. He was 48 years of age, married, with seven children, an ex-regular Army sergeant, proud of his record but ashamed his nerve had gone in his last battle. So ashamed to have to ask for Relief to supplement his pension, he could hardly pick up his feet properly. Then, one day, the Ministry of Pensions noticed Mr. X and said the magic word, "Rehabilitation!"

It took a long time to get Mr. X over his shame. The Psychiatrist in the Neurosis Hospital worked hard. Finally, he said to the two social workers, "Mr. X is ready to find his self-respect. He should have his own business." Mr. X had been an agricultural gang-master between wars. He knew the country and the farmers and the fruits of the earth, but he did not feel able to control men any more. He *could*, however, buy and sell vegetables, and trade from a van. So the social workers consulted the kindly Disablement and Rehabilitation Officer. It seemed easy. All Mr. X had to do was to fill up a form. But there were no forms available. They had not arrived from Headquarters. Undaunted, the social workers borrowed the official copy and puzzled through six pages of questions with Mr. X. They were duly typed in triplicate, as requested, and sent through to the Manpower Board. Then the formal answer came: a grant could not be considered until permits and promises of supplies had come from all the Departments concerned.

The social workers scratched their heads. They flew to the Resettlement Advice Officer, who scratched his while he examined his Bible. Typewriters clicked. Missives went out apace—to the Ministry of Food, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Division, London, for a wholesale licence; to the Local Food Committee for a retail licence; to the Ministry of Supply, Timber Control, for timber to make boxes and containers; to the Ministry of Food, Feeding Stuffs Division, for fodder for the horse. The social workers sank back, thinking their job was done. Not so! It was decreed that Potatoes and Carrots are not Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Division, London—they are Potato and Carrot Division, Oxford. The Local Food Committee regretted they had sent an obsolete form and would Mr. X fill in another? The Manpower Board remembered something they had forgotten: how much did horses cost, and vans, and wood, and how were the permits getting on? And Feeding Stuffs wanted to know how many hands the hypothetical horse possessed before they could agree to feed it. The forms and correspondence rolled in thick and fast, and Mr. X lived in the office, amazed, anxious, signing between the crosses, answering questions, reporting progress. The social workers grew to know him very well, his views on religion, politics—and Government Departments.

After two months, the end was not in sight, and Mr. X would have been back on Relief had not the understanding Ministry of Pensions provided him with a treatment allowance which fed and housed his family. There were some nasty moments. The Manpower Board said: "Mr. X has been a gang-master. The country

needs gang-masters. He must remain one!" The social workers hurried to the Board. Dodging the small fry with a skill acquired only after long practice, they found the Chairman who, like most senior officials, had an understanding heart once his head was convinced he would not be wasting Public Money. Then the social workers realised that all the Government Departments seemed to have answered politely—except the most important, which had not vouchsafed an answer at all. Frantic phone calls brought the file to the surface and at last all seemed well.

The horse was a beauty and duly passed by the official Veterinary Surgeon as without spot or blemish, the dray was elegant, the premises approved, the wood available, the wholesale and retail licences signed and delivered and the grant paid. There was just one small difficulty. The licence for fodder had not arrived and horses are hungry things. Mr. X looked wistfully at the two social workers, but they had nothing but forms to offer. What a pity horses (and humans) cannot live on forms alone. H. M.

THE CHRISTMAS OF IVAN IVANOVICH

Every year—ever since he had become "our well-known and gifted novelist"—Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov had a Christmas tree.

That is why, on the evening of December 24th, 1899, the moon, rising into the skies, halted in motionless stupefaction. With raised eyebrows and parted lips quivering in a suppressed giggle, she stared incredulously towards the earth. She was looking into the windows of Ivan Ivanovich's flat—and this is what she saw.

In the centre of a large room stood a tall Christmas tree. The light of burning candles flickered gaily in its dark green branches. Ivan Ivanovich, wearing his best clothes and a distinct bright smile on his face, his hands clasped behind his back, was pacing around it with slow steps.

Apart from the candles there were no Christmas decorations on the tree—it was hung all over with nothing but press cuttings, and here and there a few rubber toys suspended in the branches: dogs, donkeys, pigs and similar animals. Ivan Ivanovich walked solitarily around the tree; occasionally he stopped opposite one of the press cuttings, carefully smoothed it out with his hands, cleared his throat and read it out aloud, his voice trembling:

"The new story by our well-known and gifted novelist, Mr. I. I. Ivanov, once again testifies to his elevated outlook on life and his heartfelt love of Man; it comes to support our opinion of the profundity of his talent. . . ."

Smiling blissfully, Ivan Ivanovich folded the piece of paper, placed on his palm the rubber dog which was dangling by its tail, looked at it with sincere pity and said, loudly and with conviction:

"Did you hear? And you—you don't acknowledge my talent! You criticise . . . you swear at me! Ah, you! It's all nothing but envy, I know. You are jealous that I have such great talent. Jealousy is a bad thing. There—you are jealous of me, and I have hung you up by your tail on the Christmas tree—see? . . ."

He flicked the dog off his palm and it jerked in the air for a long time, evidently wriggling with the discomfort of its position.

Ivan Ivanovich was meanwhile reading the next cutting:

"In the person of I. I. Ivanov Russian literature has been enriched by yet another great talent. . . ."

"Ha, ha ha!"—the talented Ivan Ivanovich laughed delightedly and, picking up the rubber piglet, said:

"Well? Are you hanged? You see how dangerous it is to be unfair: you say about me that I am a wretched little scribbler, but the others say I am almost a Turgenev. . . . And the others are in the majority, yesss!. . . . That's how it is. There, count for yourself: there are sixty-two flattering reviews hanging on this tree, and of you who criticise me there are only seven. Eh?"

Ivan Ivanovich snapped his fingers at the piglet's snout and started to read a third review:

"When pessimists bewail the sterility of Russian literature, I always feel they simply do not know what they are talking about: is not our literature graced by the genius of Ivan Ivanov?"

Ivan Ivanovich felt that even his back was blushing. He looked round, shyly happy, but there was nobody in the room except himself. This review was his favourite. When he first received it, he—usually quite indifferent to religion—went to church and prayed for the health of the unknown critic.

And now, having read this testimony to his genius aloud to the very end, he sighed deeply and piously pressed it to his lips. Then, addressing himself to the tree-dangling effigies of the critics dissatisfied with his works, he said in a deep voice, his forefinger significantly raised, "Take heed, ye pagans!"

Whereupon he collected them from off the tree, tied them together into one bunch and flung them into the corner. But he was loth to part with the cuttings . . . he gazed at them frowning, and wondering how to extract some more enjoyment from them. But how? He stood there pensively for a few minutes; then, with a bright smile, he began to take them off the tree and spread them out on the couch in the corner. Having covered the whole couch with them, he blew out the candles on the Christmas tree, undressed and lay down on top of the cuttings, each one full of praising accounts of him. . . .

It was dark and quiet in the room. From time to time the paper would rustle with a soft, ear-caressing noise, or there would be a sound of a happy, soft chuckle. . . .

"Ha, ha, ha, i-hi!"

Then one could hear a gentle snore. . . .

The moon in the sky blew out her cheeks and swam on along her course, choking with suppressed laughter.

MAXIM GORKI

(*Translated by Helen Rapp*)

NATIVITY

It was right, it was suitable,
That all should be
Of the utmost simplicity.

Stable and star . . .
These deeply are
The things we know.
The raftered barn and the usual sky;
England or Palestine, both the same
But for the name;
And the child's first cry.

Jesus a baby; the gentle cow
Looking on, ready to give
Her milk if the Virgin's milk should fail.
As then, as now.
Ready to give, that Messiah should live,
Her milk for St. Joseph to squirt in the pail.

Truths surrounding Him at His birth
When he first drew breath;
Such plain and pastoral truths of the barn
and the earth.
They stood for the cycle of life, though His
end was death,
As the end of us all is death.

And their nostrils gently blew,
Smoking on winter air;
—Nostrils of velvet, udders of silk,
Looking over the wall
That divided stall from stall,
They blew soft scent of pasture and herbs
and milk.
At the child, as at one of their calves.
No incense or myrrh.

Great St. Peter and great St. Paul
Travelled far from the stable stall.
Cathedrals, cardinals, all the state,
All the dogma and all the weight,
All the structure of Church and creed,
When Christ in His greater simplicity
Had already given us all we need.

It was right, it was suitable,
That all should be
Of the utmost simplicity
At that Nativity.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

ROUND THE SHOWS

At the R.W.S. Galleries in Conduit Street there is a British Council exhibition of "Les jeunes graveurs contemporains." This is the name of a society founded in 1927, and so the *graveurs* are no longer noticeably *jeunes*. There are some things by Fougeron, and pretty poor they are, but nothing by the other youngish artists who have come to the top during the Occupation, such as Manessier, Dubuffet, Fautrier, Pignon, Gischia, Tal Coat. The most interesting thing to me is a series of etchings by Jacques Villon, who is not young, but whose masterly paintings have gained proper recognition only in the last few years and are still unknown in England. The first of his pictures I saw bowled me over chiefly by their colour, but I think that these etchings are enough to prove his outstanding stature. The exhibition is rich in works by artists familiarity with whom has bred in us the deepest respect: Matisse, Bonnard, Picasso, Rouault. Also it is a pleasure to see again etchings by such charming artists as Léon Lang and Hermine David. In the same Gallery there is an exhibition of Chinese woodcuts from Chungking. The artists have abandoned their own tradition and have not been very happy in the European models to whose influence they have submitted. But their skill is indisputable, and often they effectively reflect the courage and suffering of their compatriots.

The London Group exhibition at Burlington House, despite the absence of several peaks, offers a very fair cross-section of contemporary English painting; sensibility and taste are the prevalent characteristics. Victor Pasmore with a not very large picture priced at three hundred guineas seems to be settling down into the Whistler *de nos jours*—with this difference, that he disconcerts nobody. He is the most charming painter in England. Duncan Grant, on the other hand, has disguised his once so alluring Muse as a repentant Magdalen, and his *Gamekeeper* certainly disconcerts me. (Every honest critic must occasionally own a failure to understand what some artist he admires is aiming at.) Vanessa Bell's large painting has many beautiful passages, but does not seem to me to hold together, and the girl's arms are specially unconvincing. Her small picture, *The French Window*, is delicious, brimming with spontaneity and happiness. Ivon Hitchens is well represented by *Effect*, *Mother and Child*, 1940, Edward le Bas by *High Tide*, *Rye*, and Nina Hamnett by *Mrs. Stewart*. There are also good pictures by Ruskin Spear, Geoffrey Tibble, Antony Devas, Fred Uhlman, de Plessis, Vera Cuningham, Edna Ginesi, Janet Fyvie, and several artists with whose work I am not familiar—Florence Humphrey-Holland, Betty Roberts, Roy Sackman, Sheela Walters, G. A. Mostyn, Marianne Katz. Notice, too, the excellent pictures by Malcolm Drummond, a Camden Town Group artist who has recently died. He should be represented in the Tate. Altogether this exhibition is in its quiet way highly enjoyable.

William Scott and his wife Mary Scott are showing watercolours at the Beger. He lived in France and painted like a Frenchman until the War made him a British soldier; and now in Wales he has imbibed a Celtic romanticism. The first results of this, though provisional, are very interesting. I continue to think Mr. Scott one of the most promising artists in this country and am impatient for his demobilisation. Mrs. Scott also is accomplished. Her watercolours, which show the influence of the Picassos of the *époque rose*, make me wish to see what she does in oils. In the same gallery Mr. Meninsky has a group of gouaches, pastoral scenes romantically conceived, some of them revealing an odd affinity with the work

of that delightful and little known French painter, Mablord.

At the Lefevre Cecil Collins shows a number of his curious works, in which a sort of Anglo-Saxon calligraphy is combined with reminiscences of Klee to serve an enigmatic symbolism. The careful naïvety that made his last exhibition so difficult for me to enjoy has been considerably diminished. Katherine Church's water-colours are skilful and also so impetuous as to be very uneven. I think she should be more cautious in deciding which of her works should be shown to the great cruel public. *Cressed, June Evening* and *Froxfield Church in Snow (No. 1)* are instances of what she can bring off when at the top of her form.

At Tooth's a varied collection of old English pictures are being shown for the Commandos Fund. The newly discovered Hogarth portrait of a prizefighter and a Gainsborough landscape with a sky that suggests Constable are the stars in a varied and successful programme.

ROGER MARVELL

RADIO NOTES

SURELY there must come a moment—sooner, I hope, rather than later—when public exasperation with the miserable quality of transmission on *all* the British stations will boil over and scald the technicians of the B.B.C. The present state of affairs is in fact almost as bad as it was during the war, when special conditions made poor reception in certain areas unavoidable. Now, bad reception, constant fading, distortion, etc., etc., are general everywhere; even with a better set than most listeners possess, and with a long outside aerial, my own region (not to mention London) sounds neither more nor less well than one of the smaller French or German stations used to sound, over here, before the war. Criticism of the quality of broadcasts is difficult, in the circumstances, and when I am advised that something new or especially interesting is to be broadcast by Scottish or Northern Ireland, I know in advance that it will be useless for me to attempt to hear it. The Light Programme is in even worse case, for on 261 m. it is inaudible, while the "Wartime Civilian Receivers," which are the only sets at present on the market, know nothing of long waves at all. As the vast majority of the listening public prefers the Light Programme to anything else, this position must cause considerable irritation and will almost certainly strengthen the case of those who are pressing for the introduction of commercial networks in this country. I should have thought that broadcasting had become a sufficiently important factor in national life for the B.B.C. to be in a position to force a priority order from the Government in the matter of labour and materials. But the fact is that the last six years have so reduced our standards of quality in everything—from tyres to orchestras—that most of us tend to accept the quacking and squealing that emerge from our loudspeakers with the same affectionate grumbling as characterises our resignation to the weather of the British Isles.

The eightieth birthday of Sibelius was very worthily celebrated by two well chosen and exceptionally well performed concerts. Sibelius is one of the strangest cases in the history of music, and musicians will probably always be divided into those who regard him with unreserved veneration and those who find his ideas commonplace and his harmony dull. Yet, after last week's concerts, I think it would be hard for any open-minded and sensitive critic, of any nation (and Sibelius's music is virtually unplayed outside Scandinavia, England and the United States), to deny the imaginative intensity, the masterly composition, the intellectual nobility, the skill and variety of scoring, of such works as *Tapiola*, *The Swan of Tuonela*, and the later symphonies. Sibelius is not a composer for every day, and his style is too elusive to provide a model; but it is impossible seriously to doubt that his best work will endure.

To discover a genuine work of art in the Children's Hour is perhaps not so surprising, but I fear this position may have caused many listeners to have overlooked Dylan Thomas's "Memories of Christmas," broadcast last Sunday. I am not sure how far some of the Joycean word-sequences may have been intelligible to the children who were listening, but I cannot imagine any adult not being rapt away into a nostalgic dream by this most lovely and poetical broadcast. It should be instantly repeated, at a peak listening hour. With his most recent poems Mr. Thomas has, quite suddenly, become one of the best poets in this country, and those who heard the programme of his poetry last Friday will, I hope, have been as moved as I was by the arresting beauty of the verse and the eloquence with which he delivered it.

RECOMMENDATIONS.—*Dec.* 23. Bach's Christmas Oratorio (2.30 p.m.); The Poet's Christmas (New Poems, 10.38 p.m.).

Dec. 24. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (4 p.m.); J. B. Priestley (L.P. 9.15 p.m.)

Dec. 25. Music at Christmas (L.P. 4 p.m.).

Dec. 26. Messiah (7.15 p.m.); Odes of Horace (Sir Edward Marsh, 10.40 p.m.).

Dec. 27. Hey-Nonny-Nonny and Hi-De-Ho (Forces Educational Broadcast, L.P. 3 p.m.); Recital (Clifford Curzon, 8 p.m.); The Snow Queen (9.15 p.m.).

Dec. 28. Russian Music (11.30 a.m.); A Midsummer Night's Dream (8 p.m.).

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

THE MOVIES

"Road to Utopia," at the Carlton
"The Walt Disney Show," at the Cameo, Charing Cross Road
"The Marriage" and "Children of the Soviet Arctic," at the Tatler
"Intolerance," at the Scala

Everything for the next few days takes on a seasonable or an unseasonable air. Will it do for Christmas? One looks round the cinemas, and first—I think it must come first—there's *Road to Utopia*, still running after months at the Carlton. Messrs. Hope and Crosby, universal uncles, couldn't be in better spirits or form.

No new Disney, but at the reopened Cameo, near Leicester Square station, sixty Disney cartoons are being shown between now and January 20th. In a first dip I found a Goofy I hadn't seen before, *Californy or Bust*, a skit on the pioneering days. There seemed to be a lot of Goofy faces, among the tomahawkers as well as in the covered wagon, and that added a touch of nightmare. The best Goofy pictures, however, have no one else in sight: at the most one accomplice. Here also I found and relished again Pluto on the seashore, Donald starting fires and trying to put them out, Mickey being teased by a whirlwind. These crisp little anecdotes have more staying power than any of Disney's full-length fairy tales.

Then, farther up the Charing Cross Road, there's an unexpectedly diverting programme at the Tatler. A Chehov one-acter, *The Marriage*, has been made by Isadore Annensky into a film somewhat after the style of *The Italian Straw Hat*. Can one imagine a more pompous ninny than this bridegroom, who must be bribed with furniture and linen and have a general at his wedding? A lively sense of caricature bounces us through the festivities. The surprise is the hired "general," no general at all but an honest old whiskery tar who makes an exit of genuine dignity. The other film tells the story of Russians attempting to educate the Eskimo. They succeed, of course. This is more exciting than it sounds; the huge sun shining down the snows, the families packed in tents, the sleds coming and going, the children—rarely have I seen children more natural or charming. When in a fit of restlessness they chuck school to go hunting, we should like to go off with them. But the director, Mark Donskoi, reminds us on the whole tactfully that his theme is the creation of new Soviet citizens.

The second programme given to members of the New London Film Institute was taken up entirely by Griffith's *Intolerance*. Astonishing piece! "A sunplay of the ages." Its separate stories converge after two and a half hours towards a climax in which the fall of Babylon, Calvary, St. Bartholomew's Eve and a pardon being rushed to a modern scaffold, run neck to neck for a close finish. Melodrama, perhaps, but too bold, except in its concluding visions of peace on earth, to be vulgar. The Babylonian scenes have a grandeur, still inherent, that, as a boy, I found overwhelming. They owed some of their intoxication to Luigini's "Suite Egyptienne," which alas had been dropped from the score on Monday evening.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

TRANSATLANTIC CAROLS

The House of Commons and the American Congress will be linked . . . when the B.B.C. broadcast carols. Six Labour M.P.s will sing and Congressmen will respond.

I. THE WESTMINSTER WAKES

The first day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A credit in a locket on the Christmas tree.
Welcome Yule.

The second day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A gift with strings a-dangling on the Christmas tree.
So what?

The third day of Christmas my true love sent to me
An I.O.U. from Britain on the Christmas tree.
Sing holly!

The fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A pledge of trade expanding on the Christmas tree.
Sez you!

The fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
Gold dollars for my pocket on the Christmas tree.
Alleluya!

The sixth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A golden handcuff jangling on the Christmas tree.
Noel! Noel!

The seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A little frozen mitten on the Christmas tree.
Good cheer!

The eighth day of Christmas my true love sent to me
A rule for Empire commerce on the Christmas tree.

A credit in a locket,
A loan with strings a-dangling
An I.O.U. from Britain
A pledge of trade expanding,
Gold dollars for my pocket
A golden handcuff jangling
A little frozen mitten
A rule for Empire commerce
And I'm up a gum tree.

II. THE CONGRESS CHOIR

Good Lord Halifax looked out
On the feast of Stephen,
Where the gold lay all about,
Bright and thick and even.
Halifax told Uncle Sam
Britain's plight was cruel,
Short of shelter, fats and spam,
Currency and fuel.

"Bring me dollars, bring me gold,"
Uncle Sam has said it.
"Britain says she feels the cold,
We will give her credit.
Make a billion dollars hers,
Lend her food and raiment,
We will give her fifty years
For the debt's repayment.

"Lend her gold and lend her goods,
Much can be afforded,
Christmas trees from Bretton Woods,
She must be rewarded.
All the fats to cook her goose,
Gladly we will grant her
Every year she will reduce
Loans from Uncle Santa."

Loudly pealed St. Stephen's chime,
Christmas will be jolly!
Britain gets this festive time,
Loans with sprigs of holly.
Congress will make blessing sure
Britain's need relieving,
Lend at interest to the poor,
Giving—*and* receiving.

SAGITTARIUS

Correspondence

THE AMERICAN LOAN

SIR,—Against the weight of the argument, the American loan has been rushed through the Commons. We were assured that the only alternative would have been a tremendous lowering in our living standards. The only details which Government spokesmen gave, however, were fewer films, fewer cigarettes (of which most people, after six years of war nerves, smoke far too many), less spam and other preserved meats. We were told also that, if we rejected the loan, American opinion would be offended. Need we go on hearing this argument? Can anyone tell me anything we can do that will *not* offend (some) American opinion? We are constantly told that even our accent and the way we speak our own tongue are an outrage. Apparently only as portrayed in *The White Cliffs of Dover* and *Mrs. Miniver* are we tolerable. So is there any sense in always fussing about this highly susceptible American opinion?

The reply always is that the future depends on Anglo-American collaboration and friendship. Yes; but not as a one-way traffic. We have our friends in America, and even in the Press. They are not as a rule noisy, but they are staunch. They will stand by us if we stand by ourselves. In this last tragic week, more of the deep and admiring friendship our people have lately found for the American people has been destroyed than will be soon built up; it has been a black week for Anglo-American relations. Everyone here feels resentment at the humiliating manner in which we have been forced to huddle things through, and at the quite incredible proviso that we are not to reduce American imports of any goods without a corresponding reduction in Commonwealth goods in the same line. Had we made such a suggestion to the United States, the outcry would have deafened the world. There is a vague suggestion held out of some reduction later in U.S. tariffs. Only those who believe in fairies believe there will ever be any reduction that amounts to a row of pins.

As to scaling down our debts inside the Empire, this is politically calamitous and morally wrong. We owe India money because for our military necessity we took from her poverty goods she assuredly could not, and would not, have given us freely. We are bound to repay this debt fully. Perhaps the Empire is a nearly out-moded argument, since quite obviously our first difficulties in meeting our new obligations will be used to demand their "scaling down" in exchange for more naval and air bases and our expulsion from the Transatlantic world. But, at any rate so long as the Empire exists, we have no right to bilk India.

I do not believe that the austerity predicted if the loan is not accepted would last long. Other nations realise the value of our people as customers, if the Americans should be so unwise as to lose this market; nor do I believe that America would long be willing to forgo her own former best market. Meanwhile, a largely Socialist House of Commons has put through the worst betrayal that Socialism has suffered since Ramsay MacDonald made his deal with the Tories, and we are tied to financial conditions that will leave no time or thought for Socialist reforms.

Oxford. EDWARD THOMPSON

SIR,—The Government's case for accepting the onerous American terms was based on the argument that we had "no alternative." As Congress may quite possibly throw out the loan next March, it seems obvious that we may be *forced* to find an alternative. Common sense, therefore, suggests that the sooner we set about looking for one the better. Like our Russian and other European allies we won the war the hard way; like them, we may have to win the peace the hard way. The suggestion that the British race is too feeble and exhausted to discover any means of extricating itself from its present difficulties, if American help should be denied, is surely unworthy of Labour spokesmen.

In spite of Mr. Bevin's foreign policy, an enormous amount of good will towards this country still exists in Europe and throughout the Empire. It is pertinent to ask why a private conference of Empire representatives was not held in London simultaneously with the conference in Washington? No one doubts that Lord Keynes did his best, but how could he be expected to beat the toughest poker-players in the world with all his best cards removed from his hand? Why has no trade delegation been sent to Moscow, as well as to the Scandinavian countries and to our nearest European neighbours? Why does Mr. Dalton think we are incapable of learning to smoke Balkan or Rhodesian tobacco and like it? Is there really no cotton in the Sudan, no wood pulp or newsprint in Sweden? What is the truth about shipping? If we are really as short of ships as we are led to believe, why are we engaging, under the orders of General MacArthur, in a costly and discreditable war against the Indonesian Republic? To convey British troops to Java and keep them supplied must require a whole fleet of cargo boats which could be profitably employed elsewhere.

These are only a few of the questions which citizens of reasonable intelligence have been asking since the Government, with such indecent haste, rushed us into the American gamble. There may be convincing answers to all these queries. If so, they were not supplied by any of the principal speakers in the hurried debate in the House of Commons.

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

Stonar House, Middle Street, Deal.

INDONESIA

SIR,—The article in your issue of December 15th by Mr. de Kadt contains many true and useful remarks about the tragic situation in Indonesia, where policies contrary to the principles of the United Nations are being carried out.

One remark of his, however, requires to be challenged. He writes: "The extremists have involved the Indonesians in a struggle with the Allied Forces." This is not so.

The Times correspondent wrote to his paper on October 15th: "There are now more than 1,000 Dutch troops here under General Christison's command and forming part of the Allied Forces . . . Their behaviour is somewhat provocative and they are even more 'trigger happy' than the armed Indonesians. The responsibility for the increased number of incidents is not all on one side." Judging from this one would say that the Dutch extremists, of whom Mr. de Kadt gives a good picture, are equally responsible with the Indonesians for the outbreak of fighting.

But *The Times* correspondent goes on further: "Most Dutch here are thinking in terms of armed force . . . The handful of Dutch troops in Batavia whom one would think . . . would be interested in keeping things quiet for the time being seem on the contrary, to be forcing the pace." Judging from this one would say that the Dutch extremists are even more responsible for the outbreak of fighting than the Indonesians.

Nor are we without responsibility. The Dutch marines and other Dutch units landed in the early days were British-armed and landed at British orders, though it was known how intensely the Indonesians objected to their presence.

Moreover, at Sourabaya, which saw the first large scale fighting, British forces landed peaceably and with Indonesian co-operation, as Mallaby had stated that he had no orders to disarm Indonesian units. Next day, the R.A.F. dropped pamphlets ordering the Indonesians to disarm within 24 hours. Mallaby then stated that he had obtained four days' grace for the Indonesian disarmament. "On the next morning, however, a Colonel ordered a number of Indonesian cars to be commandeered (almost

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DENT

certainly without the Brigadier's consent)," says a first-hand British report. "That was the last straw."

When one considers that British policy, which began with announcements that we went to Indonesia to disarm the Japanese, has now become the restoration of the Netherlands Indies Government "in full" and the maintenance and use of Japanese forces to that end, one can see what a heavy responsibility the Dutch, and, unfortunately, the British extremists have to bear for involving us in a struggle with the Indonesians.

53 Springfield Road, N.W.8. ARTHUR D. CLEGG

PALESTINE

SIR,—It has struck me as a Socialist, after seven years in Africa and Asia, that the advocacy in the press, both in this country and America, has been very one-sided. This is a pity; for there is a very good case on the Arab side.

1. In the light of its present population, the smallness and aridity of the country, the meagreness of its resources in minerals, timber and so on, an increase of three to four millions of population (making it one of the most heavily populated places on earth) will present the proposed Jewish State in Palestine with far wider problems than a mere matter of irrigation (even if that is indeed feasible), if it is to maintain this population at a reasonable standard of living. There is no hinterland and there will be few markets for a country trying to establish itself and competing at the same time with California, South Africa, Italy and Spain.

2. The Balfour Declaration promised the Jews a national home in Palestine. There are thirteen million Jews in the world approximately, and there is clearly no room for them all in Palestine. If a kind of "token" force is to be put into the country, why should the arbitrary figure of four millions be chosen? What if more than four millions of Jews wish to go to the National Home? Is the Arab wrong in thinking that that might in time lead to an expansionist policy? And what becomes of the other Jews domiciled abroad? Do they retain their foreign nationality and have Palestine as a sort of "funk-hole"? If so, that is a privilege no other peoples have, and that way lies trouble—for the Jews.

3. The Arabs are surely justified in asking why in this post-war world of defeated Nazism, the Jews cannot abandon their racialism and allow themselves to become a part of the countries in which they live (thereby disposing of the Zionist problem). That they do not intend to do so is evident, for it was reported only a month ago that the Jews in Poland are busy starting up their own Jewish schools, and other institutions again. Why can they not, in a country dominated by a new Socialist universalism, bring up their children together with those of the Poles?

4. Further, are there four million Jews in Palestine going to find the security they seek surrounded by sixty million hostile and irredentist Arabs? The Zionists are surely foolish to think that they can depend indefinitely on British and American armed support. Nor, if it comes to that, do I see that the Arab refusal to be crowded out of Palestine by a distasteful culture is any more unreasonable than the Jews' 2,000-year-old irredentism.

5. Finally, these are such places as Western Australia—extensive, rich in minerals, with a fine climate and less than half-a-million inhabitants—well separated by desert from cantankerous neighbours, which could support *all* the Jews in the world. In view of this what right have we to ram the Jews down the throats of the Arabs—except that we are so much stronger? HENRY MASON

UNREST IN PERSIA

SIR,—In your Comment on "Unrest in Persia," it is suggested that "dissatisfaction with the corrupt Right Wing oligarchy which rules from Teheran is undoubtedly widespread especially among the national minorities."

(1) May it be asked to whom does the generic term "Right Wing" in Iran apply? Is it the overwhelming majority of the people of Iran who are against foreign intervention and who have steadfastly resisted insidious foreign intrigue? The apparent dichotomy between the "Right" and "Left" in Iran is in actual fact a figment of imagination on the part of certain propagandists.

(2) Does "widespread dissatisfaction and national minorities" allude to the sonorous and artificial complaint of a miserable band of "imported" agitators who roam about the northern provinces of Iran where Soviet armed forces are stationed, and perpetrate all kinds of nefarious acts inimical to the political independence of Iran?

If the expression "national minorities" is meant to convey the minorities differing in name and religion from the ruling majority and oppressed by them—analogous to the non-Russian minorities of Russia in Tsarist days—then it can be said without fear of contradiction that in Iran such minorities are non-existent. In Iran not only Turkish and Arabic speaking Moslems are treated in civil and political rights on an equal footing with their Persian-speaking fellow citizens, but even the small minority of Christian Armenians (about 60,000 altogether), Assyrians (about 10,000), Jews (about 40,000), and Zoroastrians (about 10,000) have their own deputies in the Teheran Parliament, whereas normally representation is based on one deputy per 100,000 inhabitants.

(3) To suggest that "recent incidents have been deliberately provoked by the Right Parties and Government agents" shows a distinct lack of knowledge of the situation in Iran. The so-called "Right Wing Parties," *i.e.*, patriots who by Treaty rights demand the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iran have, since the entry of Soviet troops in the country in August, 1941, gracefully tolerated the consequences of interference in their country's internal affairs on account of (*a*) their genuine friendship for the people and Government of the U.S.S.R. and (*b*) the confident desire to see the back of Soviet forces in Iran. Surely the slightest perspicacity would show even to a much maligned "Right Winger" that provoking incidents would frustrate all such hopes and would play into the hand of intransigent foreign Powers who are apt at times to blink at glaring facts.

(4) To say that "using the pretext that free elections can only be held after the Allied troops are withdrawn, the Government has postponed them," does not correspond with facts. On October 14th, 1945, the Parliament in Teheran, on its own initiative, by a majority of more than 80 per cent., passed a resolution, which became a law, forbidding elections until after all Allied troops had left the country.

(5) May I venture to stress the fact that the so-called "irregular and corrupt regime in Iran," whatever shortcomings it may or may not have, is not "maintained by Great Britain and the United States," and it is not the Government's action which encourages a "separatist movement"? It is the lack of freedom of movement which Soviet authorities have imposed on Iranian security forces and officials and the free hand given to non-Iranian agitators and turbulent elements which are causing the disturbances.

A. H. HAMZAVI,
Ambassade Impériale de l'Iran. Press Attaché.

JOHN BRAHAM

SIR,—Mr. J. Mewburn Levien and I are preparing a life of the tenor, John Braham (1774-1857).

We should be grateful for the loan of any diaries or personal papers relating to his career which your readers may possess. Every care will be taken of such papers, which will be returned to their owners as soon as possible.. MOLLIE SANDS

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

In the artist's restless search for new forms of expression, older ones are often lost. If the progress of art were simply an accumulation of qualities, if the new artist inherited all the talents of his predecessors and added his own to them, then the history of art would be a history of consistent chronological improvement. That it is nothing of the kind needs no demonstration.

A principal ambition of modern experimental novelists has been to transcend the simple narrative fiction of the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries. I take *Finnegan's Wake* to be the most austerely non-narrative novel which has ever been written. But the fact of this suppression has been calamitous for the lesser but serious writers whom Joyce and Virginia Woolf bestrode. While the great experimenters suppressed narrative for a clear artistic purpose and with the clear understanding of what it was that they wished to put in its place, the lesser writers, though finding narrative both undesirable and impossible have also failed to discover a substitute for it. Few modern novelists have the ability to tell a story, even if they wished to. They aspire to do "something more" with the result that they too often do something a good deal less. The great technical virtue of narrative lies in the ease of its sequences. Whether they rebel against it or not, writers are bound to accept the fact of printed sequences, and the smoother the continuity which they achieve the less they will be hampered or their readers irritated. But the non-narrative modern novel has not yet discovered an equivalent ease of movement.

In the descent from Scott through Stevenson to Buchan one can observe the rise and decline of narrative fiction, at first overburdened, then pure and then impoverished. Scott was a very great writer whose greatness prohibited him from being a pure narrator. A novel like *The Antiquary*, in which the narrative is relatively unadorned, reveals by contrast how much of Scott's greatness lay in a quality of poetic imagination, which clothed the bare bones of the story. In John Buchan, on the other hand, there is nothing except the story. The aura of his books is vulgar and flashy, the characters are uninteresting and superficial; but it would be a blind critic who denied Buchan's requisite narrative skill and the supreme ease of his sequences. Between the two a third Scotsman has become the prototype of pure narration.

Possibly a better selection of Stevenson could have been made than this one*, but I cannot honestly cavil at any inclusion or protest against any omission. A strong personal affection for *The Dynamiter* is not enough to justify a protest. Mr. Pritchett's aim, after all, has been to show Stevenson as a serious artist on a tolerably grand scale, and the inclusion of *The Suicide Club* is enough to remind readers that Stevenson had a more flippant side. Neither *Weir of Hermiston* nor *The Master of Ballantrae* could have been omitted without wilful idiosyncrasy, and of the pure adventure stories it was surely right to find *Kidnapped* the most successful. *Thrawn Janet* is a little vernacular masterpiece, and I am inclined to think *The Beach of Falesá* the ablest story Stevenson ever wrote. Finally, there are the rather too familiar *Travels with a Donkey*, agreeable enough, I suppose, despite their whimsicality. Certainly they reveal a facet of Stevenson which nothing else in the book has done. It is both a perceptive and an honourably representative solution.

With Mr. Pritchett's introduction, however, I find some little matter for disagreement. It was inevitable, I suppose, that there should have been in it a note of apology and justification, for Stevenson has long been out of fashion, and Mr. Pritchett is consciously bent on reinstating him. Nor is he niggardly in his praise of *Weir of Hermiston*, finding in it "all the air of being the complete, the unanswerably great Scottish novel." But I cannot think it right to lay so great an emphasis on the weaknesses of Stevenson's character without at least relating them more intimately to the books themselves. Before this century the great majority of writers was unself-conscious to a degree which we post-Freudians find hard to understand. This is not a whimsical or a paradoxical criticism. Before this century a severe aloofness between a writer and his work was the rule; an almost deliberate barrier was erected. The vain, feminine, affected Stevenson which Mr. Pritchett presents to us seems to have little to do with John Wiltshire of *The Beach of Falesá*, "a very common, common man," in Mr. Pritchett's words, ". . . odd mixture of complacency, tenacity, vulgarity (and) honesty." That is a true and perceptive description of Wiltshire, but it is notable that the editor has made no attempt to relate this particular story to the psychology of its author. In *Kidnapped* he discovers femininity and an affection for youth, but I can find no trace of either quality in *The Beach of Falesá*.

I would not wish to protest too much, but I do strongly feel that the practise of relating a writer so closely to his work is, in many cases, inept and unhelpful. Nearly everything that Mr. Pritchett says about Stevenson is illuminating, but the emphasis is misplaced. Stevenson intrudes on his own books less than almost any novelist of equivalent stature (far less than Flaubert, the maestro), and I think that the creation of Wiltshire is a token of his astonishing objectivity. To Stevenson writing was a craft, of which he knew himself to be a master. Of course, he could not produce anything which was outside the bounds of his talent, and, of course, the books are influenced by the tastes and sentiments of their creator. But the magic of artistic creation (which is peculiarly potent in Stevenson) lies precisely in the wide gap between creature and creator. The fact that he was a romantically-minded Scotsman, an egotist and an exhibitionist, does little to explain the astonishing beauty and independent reality of *Kidnapped*. "It is," writes Mr. Pritchett, with his usual perception, "far more than a boy's book. It is about the hunter and the hunted in man."

Another quality of Stevenson's which is most ably illustrated by this omnibus is his extraordinary versatility. *The Suicide Club* is a farcical Ruritanian horror-story, written with the rather pedantic precision which is exactly appropriate. *Kidnapped*, which represents all that is best known in Stevenson, is an adventure story recounted in the language of an educated Scottish boy of the mid-eighteenth century. The story is told with such grace and ease that a reader is liable to take the manner of its telling for granted. Yet it is in fact a monument of adroit and beautiful narration. Although one is never conscious of a pause, never, from start to finish, conscious that the writer has drawn breath, yet he has succeeded in mantling the plain tale with a lovely and utterly convincing atmosphere. This never impedes the action—as it so often does in Scott—for Stevenson's eye is firmly fixed on the narrative. Ornamentation is always subservient to story, yet it is, in a sense, the ornamentation that makes the story. They are not separable.

The Master of Ballantrae and *Weir of Hermiston* are Stevenson's most ambitious books. They are written in a more mandarin and ornamental style than *Kidnapped*, but an admirably lucid style, none the less. Mr. Pritchett is orthodox in finding Stevenson a "mannered" writer, but he is too wise to use the word in any pejorative sense. Of the great novelists more have been mannered than have deliberately or naturally avoided mannerisms. Proust, Flaubert and Henry James are the rule, where Fielding and Tolstoy are the exceptions. Where Stevenson is superior, even to the greatest novelists, is in the astonishing variety of his prose styles. One could not read a sentence of Henry James without assigning it indubitably to him, but one might read a whole story of Stevenson's without guessing its authorship. *The Beach of Falesá*, for example, is recommended by the "very common, common man" in his own language:

> But of all this on that first morning, I knew no more than a fly. Case used me like a gentleman, and like a friend, made me welcome to Falesá, and put his services at my disposal, which was the more helpful from my ignorance of the native.

This undistinguished and colloquial passage is typical, and it would be hard to find a quotation to illustrate the real distinction of the style. Its effect is cumulative. What Stevenson has done is to make poetry out of every-day speech, and he has done it with an ease and grace which should dumbfound the five-thumbed realist writers of our own time. Wiltshire is a consistent and a credible figure, but he could not possibly be described as typical. A brave, rather vulgar man, he also has the vision of a poet. Without that transmuting quality the story would be in no way superior to Somerset Maugham's (with which Mr. Pritchett rather questionably compares it.) Contrast the following sentences from the one quoted above.

> During his residence in London, the accomplished Prince Florizel of Bohemia gained the affection of all classes by the seduction of his manner and by a well-considered generosity.

> Syne Mr. Soulis gaed into his study amang a' his books. It's a lang, laigh, mirk chalmer perishin' cauld in winter, an' no very dry, even in the top o' the simmer, for the manse stands near the burn.

> It grew cooler and even a little darker (but not much) with the coming of the night. The sky was cloudless; it was still early in July, and pretty far north; in the darkest part of that night you would have needed pretty good eyes to read. . . .

> On the heavy sickness which declared itself next morning, I can think with equanimity, as of the last unmingled trouble that befel my master; and even that was perhaps a mercy in disguise, for what pain of the body could equal the miseries of his mind.

These sentences are from *The Suicide Club*, *Thrawn Janet*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Master of Ballantrae* respectively. They are of unequal merit: indeed, the mandarin of the last sentence is displeasing when it is thus deprived of its context. But then Stevenson is not a particularly quotable writer. With him the mind is the book, concentrated however apparently discursive; and isolated sentences inevitably look a little bit unhappy.

Stevenson is perhaps less of a writer's writer than any novelist of equal distinction. He was a master craftsman, but his craft was employed for entertainment rather than for artistic exploration. He did nothing new, except, perhaps, to tell stories better than they had been told since Poe, and I cannot think that he has any specific technical lesson for modern novelists. It is most improbable that there will be any return to narrative for narrative's sake, even if narrative be reintroduced for a new artistic purpose. The general lesson of Stevenson, however, is well worth learning. However much it may be despised, entertainment is a vitally important element of art. To me unreadable masterpieces are as absurd a phrase as round squares. The fault of our two most enterprising modern novelists has been a grave tendency to dullness. *The Waves* is a very dull book indeed, for Virginia Woolf was so possessed by her artistic experiment that she temporarily lost her capacity to entertain. There are passages of *Ulysses* which are almost classical examples of unreadability. I am not suggesting that entertainment should be aimed at directly (as Stevenson did), but from *The Odyssey* to *Howard's End* the best books have naturally entertained. To do so is a necessary attribute of art.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

* "Robert Louis Stevenson—Novels and Stories." ED. V. S. PRITCHETT. *Pilot Press*, 15s.

THE ART OF MR. DE LA MARE

The Burning-Glass and Other Poems. By WALTER DE LA MARE. *Faber.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. de la Mare is one of the very few living poets about whom it would be hard to raise an argument. Suppose, though, two critics, for the sake of patter, or because they secretly loathe each other, taking sides. "Better, of course," begins the first, feeling his way, "than Poe." "Agreed!" says the other quickly, "but who isn't?" "Poe's hollow music, but heard with an ear, and not played back on the banjo ——." "Go on!" "—then a verbal felicity, a shapeliness, the equal of Herrick's, if Herrick had day-dreamed of the unknown, not in women, but in old men, flowers and towers ——." "Everyone who writes daintily brings up Herrick; why not say it—the lapidary art!" "Because it's more than that; one thinks of *Christabel*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, Blake's *Never Seek to Tell Thy Love*—no, not lapidary!" "But not Blake, or Keats or Coleridge, either! Merely by mentioning them, you emphasise their greatness!" "Well, damn it, I never said de la Mare was a great poet! Those aren't the terms at all. But time and again he nears perfection, yes, and he's original: you can trace him, like Housman, in earlier writers—those I've mentioned, and Shakespeare of course." "Shakespeare?" "Why, the songs—Ariel's, for example." "That's all very well, but you see where these instances are leading? They prove, not how original he is, but quite the reverse—how much he rests on convention. I don't mean only his naiads and zephyrs and birds warbling in dusky glades——." "But the diction is everywhere exquisite!" "Yes, yes, exquisite but conventional! And don't you feel, with each hint at Nothingness, with the knock echoing round the silent house, that we've paid this visit before? I do; at least I think I do." "It's been said before, then?" "Well, not quite—almost said before." "And in that *almost*, so exactly and poignantly seized, art comes in!" "Oh, certainly, I wouldn't deny for a moment that de la Mare's is a highly finished poetry—he's not at all an Austin Dobson, I mean. Don't mistake me." "Not an Austin Dobson, and not a Coleridge—quite so. My opinion in a nutshell. Then what are we arguing about?"

He is—let us say—the miniaturist of mystery and imagination. I don't know that one can go much further in definition; except possibly to add that few other writers exercise so potent a spell that yet lifts the moment we are away from him; and when one comes back the articulation of frost and mist may surprise us. That, at least, has been my experience with *The Burning-Glass*, as with the other volumes. Has Mr. de la Mare changed at all in forty years? A shade more definition, perhaps, a shade less mystery; the image emerges now delicate and distinct like the lines of Chinese drawing:

> Blackbird silent in the snow;
> Motionless crocus in the mould;
> Naked tree; and, cold and low,
> Sun's wintry gold. . . .

> Lost for the while in their strange beauty—self
> how far?—
> Lulled were my senses into a timeless dream;
> As if the inmost part of what they are
> Lay open in what they seem.

Or:

> There is a thicket in the wild
> By waters deep and dangerous,
> Where—close as loveless sisters—grow
> Nightshade and the convolvulus. . . .

He can conjure—but how lightly!—spears and breast-plates from the sun flashing in the river; sheep seen in a morning mist appear as "sarsen stones," and the druidic vision hovers. My own fondness is for these visionary natural scenes, though everywhere—in an epigram, a reverie, a romantic ballad, a refinement of Gothic, or a portrait—there is the same subtle interplay of sense and music. To the poem called *Swifts* and dated 1943, the war has imparted strain and ecstasy, both together:

> No; they are only birds—swifts, in the loft of the morning,
> Coursing, disporting, courting, in the pale-blue arc of the sky,
> There is no venom for kin or for kind in their wild-winged archery,
> Nor death in their innocent droppings as fleet in their mansions they fly;
> Swooping, with flicker of pinion to couple, the loved with the loved one,
> Never with malice or hate, in their vehement sallies through space,
> Listen! that silken rustle, as they charge on their bee-hive houses,
> Fashioned of dried-up mud daubed each in its chosen place.
> Hunger—not fear—sharps the squawk of their featherless nestlings;
> From daybreak into the dark their circuitings will not cease:
> How beautiful they! and the feet on earth's heavenly mountains
> Of him that bringeth good tidings, proclaimeth the gospel of peace.

The Burning-Glass and Other Poems appears after a gap of seven years, and brings hints of self-portraiture, the resigned gesture that half believes in itself, but no diminution of talent. A verse from the title-poem beautifully defines its writer:

> Words may create rare images
> Within their narrow bound;
> 'Twas speechless childhood brought me these,
> As music may, in sound.
> In these poems old age and childhood meet.

G. W. STONIER

PICTURE BOOKS

Blake. Introduction by G. KEYNES. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s.*

Music in Painting. Introduction by L. HAWARD. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s.*

Florentine Paintings. Introduction by SIR KENNETH CLARK. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s.*

Degas. Introduction by R. H. WILENSKI. *Faber and Faber.* 6*s.*

Italian Painting (Up to Leonardo and Raphael). Introduction by TANCRED BORENIUS. *Avalon.* 8*s.*

Later Italian Painting. Introduction by TANCRED BORENIUS. *Avalon.* 8*s.*

Dutch Painting. Introduction by J. B. MANSON. *Avalon.* 8*s.*

Flemish Painting. Introduction by EMILE CAMMAERTS. *Avalon.* 8*s.*

The public for painting seems to have signally increased during the war, but it remains much smaller than the public for music. I suspect that most persons are born with less capacity for being deeply moved by the visual arts than by either music or literature. Moreover, good music is incomparably more easily available than good painting. London is the only place in the United Kingdom where you can obtain a wide knowledge of the Old Masters, or any knowledge at all of the contemporary masters. A dozen or so of our other cities possess, of course, important picture-galleries, but none of them could give you so much experience of painting as you could get of music from listening for a month to the wireless. The touring exhibitions of the Arts Council, valuable as they are, reach a smaller public than a Bartók quartet or any other of the least listened to of B.C.C. programmes.

The obvious answer to the problem, it will be said, is to spread reproductions of paintings as widely as wireless-sets and gramophones. The books I am now reviewing have, I presume, been prepared by most authoritative writers with this praiseworthy intention. But let us not deceive ourselves. Music can be reproduced incomparably better than painting. On a good wireless set (and a good "length") you hear not much worse than in the Albert Hall; and a good gramophone has the further advantage of offering an enormous repertoire. The best coloured reproduction of a painting in oils, on the other hand, falls far short of the original. It is less satisfactory than even an early gramophone record, since it is not only muzzy but out of tune, the colour-relations being falsified. And the greater the difference in size between an original and a reproduction, the more misleading the latter becomes; a square inch of an Impressionist picture, for instance, is liable to show a dozen different pigments, and in a smaller reproduction this will be represented by half a square millimetre of uniform colour. For my part, therefore, I infinitely prefer reproductions in black and white, which can be compared with piano arrangements of a symphony—inadequate, certainly, but not discordant or actively mendacious.

Of course, I do not for an instant pretend to a nicer taste than Sir Kenneth Clark and the other distinguished contributors to the "Faber Gallery." They rightly wish to increase the public for pictures, and they know that most of their compatriots can seldom or never see the originals. Is it not better, I shall be asked, to give some notion of a great colourist than to give none? And I suppose it would seem priggish if one answered "Better no notion than a false one." I must indeed admit that coloured plates are more likely than others to break through an indifference to painting. (And this does provide a *raison d'être* for the Faber gallery.) But the sooner the new recruit can be taken from them, the better for his eye. Except perhaps two or three of the paler Blakes, all these colour plates are misleading; in the Degas book they become libellous; and some of those in the Avalon series are positively funny. (I am sure that Dr. Borenius knows the Botticelli frescoes in the Louvre more intimately than I do, and, therefore, I suspect that the version of one of them in this book must have given him an even greater surprise.) I am sure the publishers have taken pains, and had great difficulties to contend with. I have seen better reproductions than any of these, but the real trouble is that a faithful reproduction of an oil-painting remains impossible. (Watercolours and drawings, I should add, can be reproduced exactly, if the size is not reduced; the Marees Press Cézannes and Tiepolos, for instance, were, as far as I could tell, flawless.) In the series published by the Avalon Press most of the plates are in monochrome. But in two of the volumes sepia has been used, which seems to me inexcusable; and in none of them is the printing reasonably sharp. (Presumably the style of paper needed was unobtainable.) It is therefore only for the letterpress that I can unreservedly recommend any one of these eight volumes.

Both series being intended for the great public, the authors can assume little previous knowledge in the reader. The difficulty of covering Flemish painting in some 16,000 words, Italian in some 36,000, is prodigious. How can the author escape from commonplaces, except into some occasional paradox which there is no space to justify? The most unorthodox and personal line that Dr. Borenius allows himself is to give pictures by Melozzo and Pontormo, and not by Signorelli or Fra Bartolommeo. He has succeeded in covering his prodigious subject remarkably well. His writing is far from elegant: sometimes his phrases reveal indeed that he is not writing his native tongue. M. Cammaerts has an easier subject, and handles English better, but his book is not quite so good; and I think it a pity that patriotism led him to include such 19th century artists as Laermans and Smits. The book on Dutch painting can be applauded like the others for the mass of necessary information it succinctly presents.

The Faber Gallery writers have less ground to cover, and their remarks are consequently more stimulating. Sir Kenneth Clark is remarkable not only as an expert and as a man of taste—he has an outstanding gift for writing. How happy for instance, is his comparison of Florentine Trecento painting with Sienese.

> The Florentines could not assimilate the grace of gothic and retained only its asperities. They took the thorn and left the rose to their charming enemies.

Everything he says is full of point. My only complaint, apart from the colours in the plates,

is that he devotes one to a picture that is more interesting as a problem than happy as a work of art—a crowded, uncomfortable affair from which a central section may have been removed.

Mr. Laurence Haward's *Music in Painting* is an anthology ranging from Tura to Picasso. The idea of the book and the execution are alike admirable. The author's love of music has obviously led him to a long study of ancient instruments. The beautiful Le Nain, like the Domenico Veneziano in Sir Kenneth's book, is comparatively little known. (One is the more grateful because in all these books the proportion of very familiar, not to say hackneyed, pictures is rather high.) Mr. Geoffrey Keynes, the greatest of all authorities on Blake, contributes a valuable introduction, but keeps his notes on individual works very concise and business-like. Mr. Wilenski perhaps over-emphasises the importance in Degas of "occupational gestures"; after all, the painter's interest in such gestures did not take him beyond dancers and laundresses. Mr. Wilenski in his interesting text seems writing for a better informed public than do his colleagues.

I should like in conclusion to insist upon the intense enjoyment obtainable from photographs of pictures, though a purist would argue that even these must falsify some tonal relations. An epidiascope, no less than a gramophone, should be considered a natural part of a well-furnished house. And no publishing venture would be more welcome than very large and cheap editions of books containing black-and-white reproductions, similar in size and quality to those in the *Details from Pictures in the National Gallery*.

ROGER MARVELL

ROMANTIC ACTING

Madame Sarah. By MAY AGATE. *Home and Van Thal*, 9s. 6d.

Ego 7: By JAMES AGATE. *George G. Harrap*, 15s.

At the beginning of a little book described as "a study in the technique of acting," Miss May Agate tells us that she first saw Sarah Bernhardt in 1910. Sarah, born in 1844, was then sixty-six. By that time she had worn what remained of her genius to pieces in incessant work; in what Miss Agate describes as "astounding world tours"; in the management, meanwhile, of a large Parisian theatre. The *woman*, indeed, was not yet exhausted; at least, her invincible courage would never have allowed her to admit it. The *actress* was. I am afraid that Miss Agate has never seen the real Sarah Bernhardt on the stage. We are talking about art, not energy.

Miss Agate saw, instead, a woman of the same name, opulent in aspect, no longer "spectre-thin"; hoarse-voiced, using gutteral sounds, not golden notes; mechanised in style; rarely inspired; predictable in all her familiar artifices. The display of the whites of the eyes, the *martelage* or hammering out of the rhythm of an Alexandrine, with marking of the hemistich; the churning up of a passion, with a rush of not always well articulated words; the sudden pounce upon a phrase, with arms thrown out; then crashed upon the sides as a climax. One knew it all. One could see it coming. There was no sense of surprise.

Even when I first saw Sarah Bernhardt she was not quite at her best; so older playgoers told me. But the voice had not greatly suffered from the hard strain she put upon it. She murmured the first act of *Phèdre* with an entrancing languor of despair. She stabbed the villain in *La Tosca*, after a sinister stare at the breadknife on his table, with a tremendous vigour. She was the tigerish, repentant, amorous, suicidal Russian Princess in *Fédora* to perfection. She was also a pathetic Marguerite Gautier, embroidering, inventing, pressing every atom of dramatic value out of *La Dame aux Camélias*, which is, in essence, a simple tale of thwarted consumptive love, and ought to have been called, in Wilde's title, *La Sainte Courtisane*. I have heard her chaunting, in a voice that alternately lulled and disquieted, soothed and terrified, through a score of other parts. Sarah was a romantic actress. She was never, in the strict sense, natural; always exalted, exotic. Why Miss Agate supposes her to have been "naturalistic"—meaning, I suppose, realistic—I cannot imagine.

It was Eleonora Duse who was the realist. To see her in *La Dame aux Camélias*, after having seen Sarah Bernhardt, was indeed a lesson in "the technique of acting." To me at least (many others have recorded a like impression) Duse in that play—as in several other parts—swept the recollection of Sarah Bernhardt out of mind. Alas! why does Miss Agate, who never saw her in it, quote a certain lady with the sea-bird name of Guillemot as saying that Duse was "ridiculous" as Marguerite. Mme Guillemot talks nonsense. I must add that to assert that Duse was never considered in France to be anything like the equal of Sarah is a piece of totally false theatrical history. The success of Duse in Paris was overwhelming—never equalled by the visit of any invader since Macready appeared there in 1844.

If Miss Agate has never seen Sarah on the stage she *has* seen her "off." She knew her, loved her; Sarah taught her, Sarah protected her. Sarah (on the last page) "in some quiet, pale golden corner of heaven" still protects, and waits for *la petite May*. All this is touching. The book is a record of friendship not a study of acting; for we need not linger over Miss Agate's rather elementary disquisitions on the art of sounding or silencing an "e" in the recitation of French verse.

Mr. James Agate is also an admirer of Sarah Bernhardt, as of his sister's book which he describes as "a lovely little work." Is he also a Romantic? He says so, in a petulant criticism of Bernard Shaw's "debunking" plays. One would not have supposed it from a reading of his dramatic criticisms: alert, witty at times, at other times too jocose, but always revealing a true sense of the theatre. Mr. Agate modifies his self-portrait by added touches. "I am a provincial of commonplace exterior who began his assault on London at the age of forty-one without a ha'penny and with no influence." He seeks for survival from his diaries. He hopes that it will be said of him that "he was a fair dramatic critic, an admirable diarist, a prodigious worker and a financial genius of the first order." (He tells us that, since he wrote his first article for *The Saturday Review*, twenty-two years ago, he has earned about £70,000.) I rearrange the proportion of praise by putting his dramatic criticism first. This will annoy him; but he likes being annoyed, because he can then flatly contradict, cut a derisive caper, cry "rubbish" or "all-my-eye," and even declare that the theatre bores him. He admits that he occasionally drowses at a play. "After which," runs another entry in the diary, "to some bloody thing at the theatre." This is typical of the "prodigious" worker who goes to too many plays and places, writes too much, and rarely gives himself time to think. That may be why he despises creatures of his own imagination called highbrows. These bogies inhabit a limbo named Bloomsbury. They are "fat, elderly and pompous"; until he meets one of them, whom he finds "thin, youngish, amusing, modest and in every way charming." Highbrows hunt in "gangs."

Really Mr. Agate, though a romantic provincial, whose photograph given here does not reveal a

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noticeable slenderness, ought not to allow himself to be thus haunted by corpulent phantoms. We retort upon him, in his own idiom, "highbrow yourself!" And we warn him that if he yields to superstitition he will never, in this very readable series, get as far as Ego 13—unless he decides to call that volume Ego 12*a*, like the timid ladies who live in Kensington flats, or even in lowbrow and therefore respectable parts of Bloomsbury. RICHARD JENNINGS

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Desert Episode. By G. C. GREENFIELD. *Macmillan.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Lower Deck. By JOHN DAVIES. *Macmillan.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

A Journey to the Interior is a refreshing and exciting book, beautifully written and extremely satisfying in content. It is only rarely that one encounters a first novel so rich, not in promise, but in achievement. The style is the writer's own; neither in the excellent and precisely observed conversation, nor in the descriptive passages can one detect ill-digested influences. There is no groping, it is mature writing of the best kind, simple and unaffected. It is maturity, too, that makes the content of the book so satisfying—the author is not in public flight from any neurosis, not taking a favourite complex for an airing; he knows very well what he is about. One can, of course, write interestingly enough without being in full control, and a private bias of the sort that had a root in Kafka makes, rather than mars, the more personal forms of expression. The writer, however, who has escaped his personal trap, is in the end in the stronger position and has the entry to a great number of skulls. The personal novel, with its fully understood central character (to some extent a projection of the author), and subsidiary characters standing round it like mirrors, is a limited form; the detached novel can go much farther. There is a case for thinking that the personal novel has served its purpose in a Romantic revival of which we have been largely unaware, and that it is in process of being replaced by new Classic forms. Goethe's definition of the Classic as the healthy, and the Romantic as the unhealthy, has a lot to be said for it; one can argue that the writers of this century who eagerly brought the findings of modern psychologists into the novel were doing so under the impulse of private pressures that marked them, so far as the normal world was concerned, as unhealthy. Be that as it may, the work of James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Kafka, and so on, has established the inner world of unconscious motive as the novelist's province: he can venture there now without eccentricity, or feelings of guilt. The Romantic function of breaking accepted forms has been fulfilled, and the way is clear to use the new material. It is used with brilliance, and skill, in *A Journey to the Interior*. It is broad daylight all the time, and the characters, employees of an oil company and their wives, inhabit the everyday world. Without ever plunging the reader into the Romantic dark, or tampering with reality, the author brings his central figure to an enriching emotional and spiritual experience of a most convincing kind. His power enables the reader to believe in it, and to share it. This very considerable achievement is linked with the telling of an exciting story about a robbery, and about a venture into the mountains inland from the Persian Gulf. If the author does no more than maintain the level which he has already reached with this book in future ones, he is sure to be one of our more distinguished writers.

It is fascinating to turn from *A Journey to the Interior* to a work utterly its opposite. The Pushkin Press have issued a fresh edition of Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives*, a work which seemed almost too bizarre to be revolutionary when John Rodker first published it in this country in 1927. The anti-intellectuals seized on it as the ultimate depth to which highbrow obscurantism could sink, and it was assumed to be so freakish that its end was in its being. The writing now seems very plain and normal; Hemingway and his imitators have made the plainness and the absence of Latin words familiar. The only oddity that one notices is the use of the comma for all punctuation other than full stops, and the absence of commas, now and then, where one might expect them. In the matter of content it is not the new elements that impress one; it is now apparent that Gertrude Stein was not introducing anything new but simply taking realism to its logical conclusion. The external, objective approach cannot take one any farther than this. As one studies the Three Lives of The Good Anna, Melanctha, the Gentle Lena, one is forced to admiration; how well observed, how true to life, and so on. But as time wears on, it recedes, and one reflects that photographs have to be of interesting things as well as technically perfect if they are going to be worth looking at. The horse is led up to the sandy bed of a dry stream; "It's not my fault, old man," says the author, "I'm merely a detached observer. This is the way life is." The horse may think, justifiably, that it is the author's job to use his brains and get to a place where there is water to be found.

Desert Episode and *Lower Deck* are of the same order, although the writers are not such perfect camera-users as Miss Stein. They consist of collections of snapshots taken in action at Alamein and in the Mediterranean, where the authors found themselves in line of duty. And rather obviously nothing more, so obviously that the authors have both been stricken with a sense of emptiness and have intruded a final comment.

> Three hundred miles to the west the hunt was still on and more young men were being killed and machines left derelict in the desert. One day the fighters would go from North Africa and the desert would come into its own again—dry, lonely, and unfriendly.
>
> New ships, new crews. The beginning of a new life of mutual hardship and experience out of which another ship's company will gradually be evolved.

In fact, these combatant authors have emerged from the struggle with something very like Sartre's *Eh bien, continuons*, on their lips. It would be a more impressive slogan if it had not been written on so many Italian walls in the form of *Obey, Fight, Endure!* The mindless men of action may have committed the world to brutish and insufferable ways of life in the conviction that man is inherently vile and might as well make the most of it, but there seems no very good reason for those with brains to rip them out and join in the game. Sartre's slogan is for the defeated, for those who have given up the creative struggle in favour of going with the casual tide of events and reporting with a glazed camera eye. The anti-intellectuals made a great mistake when they turned on Gertrude Stein; her literary grandchildren, the Existentialists, and the progeny of Hemingway, prove that they were spurning a powerful ally. ANTHONY WEST

The Saturday Book: Fifth Year. Edited by LEONARD RUSSELL. *Hutchinson.* 15*s.*

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THE Yorkshire Post
Voice of the North
YP. 30

"About that Will— now, who'd make a good Executor? Someone I can really trust. Better be someone who understands investments, too. Someone who won't find it all a nuisance. And, of course, someone who's sure to be there at the time—that's not so easy . . ."

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1677

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Test First Lesson

graphs, includes brisk writing by Laurence Olivier, A. L. Rowse, Stephen Spender, Nicolas Bentley, Bernard Darwin, Dilys Powell, A. H. Brodrick and C. V. Wedgwood. There are twelve drawings by Low, specially brilliant are the Julian Huxley, the Herbert Morrison and the uncharacteristically drooping Harold Laski. Boys' books, games, crimes, Corvo, Mrs. Beeton, ballet, Sherlock Holmes, Regency sofas, Pre-Raphaelites, and Somerset Maugham—if you take no interest in any of these, *The Saturday Book* is not for you.

Week-end Competitions

No. 830

Set by Sam Smiles

In a letter to the *Times* the President of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours declares that "the time has come when someone should come into the open and challenge the movement" headed by Matisse and Picasso. The former is aged 76, the latter 64, and so six guineas are offered for the best letters declaring that "the time has come when someone should come into the open" against G. B. Shaw, Logan Pearsall Smith, Walter de la Mare, Sibelius, Einstein or Winston Churchill. Limit 180 words. Entries by January 1st.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 827

Set by Nicolas Bentley

The usual prizes are offered for a gossip writer's description of meeting the guest of honour at a reception for one of the following: Mephistopheles; Little Red Riding Hood; Sherlock Holmes; Lady Macbeth; Svengali; Becky Sharp; Sir Galahad; Britannia; Don Quixote.

Report by Nicolas Bentley

A large number of entries brought Mephistopheles well to the fore as the paragraphists' favourite. Galahad, Lady Macbeth and Red Riding Hood were all about level, though well behind. Much wit and ingenuity was shown, but caricature needs, besides exaggeration, a sharp eye for authentic details. Many entries, witty in themselves, lacked observation of those touches which distinguish one gossip writer from another, yet unite them all in their own cosy corner of Grub Street. Good entries came from M. Culpan, E. W. Flowerday, R. J. P. Hewison, N. P. Meadway, Petros, Constance Sewell and Dorothy Wright. I recommend two guineas to O. and G. Ordish and also to Ira, a guinea to Stanley J. Sharpless, and half a guinea each to D. L. Chesterton and H. Gordon.

At the Gaelic Women's League gala last night I at last got near Lady Gruoch Macbeth ("Babs" to her many friends), wearing her new honours very charmingly. She was, of course, the widow of Maormor Gilcomgain before her marriage to the dashing young Glamis. One of our most famous hostesses North of the Tweed—her house-parties are so original—she was looking ravishing in her parure of cairngorms, although, she told me, she was actually an absolute martyr to insomnia.

"I'm terribly proud of Mac," she said, "for putting down the rebellion, though he won't tell me anything about that horrid Sweyn."

She is delighted with her new residence. "It is complete with a real live ghost," she told me laughingly. I feel that this plucky and determined little woman is just the wife to spur the Thane of Cawdor on to a brilliant future. Lady M. is entertaining Royalty at Inverness next week, so it is whispered.

O. and G. ORDISH

Looking none the worse for her amazing escape was petite, titian-haired Angela ("call me Red") Riding-Hood when I met her guest-of-honouring a Savoy reception last night. Miss Riding-Hood who is a niece of Sir "Robin" Hood, the timber-king philanthropist, was indignant over reports that she was visiting her grandmother at the lonely Black Forest cottage where the drama took place. "I'm British and so's Granny," she told me vivaciously, "I had a German nanny and when my ENSA tour took me near I thought I'd look her up."

All the world knows the sensational sequel. Red shivered laughingly as she recalled the events which led to "nanny" being unmasked as the leader of a Werewolf gang who had baffled our security patrols. "It was something about those staring eyes," she said, "and his huge teeth and ears. I screamed and a shot rang out." Red denied rumours of her engagement to Pte. Thomas Atkins, R.A.S.C., whose bullet saved her life. "Tommy and I are pals," she admitted, "But I've just signed a Hollywood contract, so marriage is off." And so another potential star is lost to British films. . . .

IRA

I thought Britannia was looking a little tired when I ran into her at the British Council reception yesterday. She was wearing azure and carrying a smart new utility trident.

Combining the unusual roles of society queen and financial adviser to the Mint, Britannia, of course, comes from one of England's oldest families. Among her many titles are various picturesque appellations (Mistress of the Robes, Seas, etc) now obsolete. Her husband, Sir ("Saint") George, will be remembered for his brilliant part in clearing up the Dragon Murder Case. They have a charming little pre-fab manor house in Surrey called Blessed Plotte.

Britannia has sat on numerous Royal Commissions. "In fact, I spend so much of my life sitting that I'm glad to stand up and stretch my sea legs occasionally," she confided to me over a cocktail. She is very interested in aquatics, numismatics, etc.

I asked her what she thought about the atom. She merely smiled, shook her head and made a grim little gesture with her trident.

During the evening Britannia was presented, as a token of appreciation, with a gold-mounted unsinkable waterproof ruler and a beautiful inlaid solid sterling block.

S. J. SHARPLESS

During a long conversation with Sir Galahad at the Round Table soirée our talk turned on literature. Sir Galahad told me that his favourite poet is Tennyson. "What a pity the young no longer read him!" he exclaimed. "A magnificent poet, musical, objective, uncomplicated, moral! And what a judge of character!" I asked him who was his favourite prose-writer. Sir Galahad replied, without a moment's hesitation: "Malory."

After diplomatic service on behalf of the Royal Camelot Government Sir Galahad took up an appointment with the League of Nations. During the war he served with the Reconnaissance Corps. He has just returned from a continental mission connected with the search for a valuable religious relic, which he eventually found among the loot at Karinhall. Sir Galahad is, of course, a distant relative of Mr. Anthony Eden, to whom he bears a striking physical resemblance.

D. L. CHESTERTON

Friends of Signor Mephistopheles, who attended the reception given yesterday afternoon in his honour by the 18b Club were agreeably surprised to see that the downfall of Fascism had left his truly amazing vitality quite unaffected. Since June, 1940, of course, it had been no secret in this country that he had taken more than a benevolent interest in the movement and a Cabinet Minister, to whom I spoke early this autumn even went so far as to call the Fascist Party Mephistopheles's own political instrument.

Our visitor, however, retains the utmost optimism with regard to the scope open to his activities under present-day conditions. I, for one, would not be surprised if rumours connecting him with the invention of the atomic bomb were to contain more than a grain of truth.

At the present moment Signor Mephistopheles has not yet decided on a permanent residence and I understand that he intends to delay his choice till the United Nations Administration have chosen their domicile. In the meantime, he has pressing engagements in Palestine and Java and is also, as he told me, anxious to visit India.

H. GORDON

Company Meeting

BARCLAYS BANK (DOMINION, COLONIAL AND OVERSEAS)

NEW OVERSEAS CORPORATION.

The ordinary general meeting of Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas) will be held at 29, Gracechurch Street, London, E.C., on December 28.

The following is an extract from the statement by the chairman Sir William M. Goodenough, Bt., circulated with the report and accounts:—

Turning to the balance-sheet, the figures once more show expansion—current, deposit and other accounts having increased by about £39,000,000 during the year. This is a repetition of the familiar trend of the war years, but we have to remember that war conditions prevailed during the greater part of the period under review. Cash and money at call are higher and represent a slightly increased proportion of our assets, while advances remain at much the same figure as last year. The recent changes in interest rates in London must react upon the Bank's future earnings, but it is difficult for me at this stage to say how much we are likely to be affected.

The chairman has also circulated a letter to shareholders, from which the following is an extract:—

For some years past your directors have been considering in what way Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas), with its unique experience of overseas banking and its extensive branch system, could further the economic development of territories in which it is interested. They propose to form a new corporation, "Barclays Overseas Development Corporation, Limited."

The authorised capital is to be £5,000,000, of which £1,000,000 will be issued in 100,000 "A" shares of £10 each. These shares will be paid for by Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas) and allotted to the bank and/or its nominees at a premium of 50 per cent., thus enabling the corporation to commence business with a reserve fund of £500,000. The approval of the Capital Issues Committee has been obtained. The Corporation will have a separate Board of Directors.

Although the Corporation will work principally through the numerous branches of your bank, which will act as agents where required, the granting of financial assistance will not be conditional upon the transfer of the relative banking business to Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas). Indeed, should the activities of the Corporation expand to a considerable degree, it may become necessary to form local committees in overseas territories and possibly also to raise funds locally, in which event the co-operation of the local communities and banks would be welcomed.

By reason of the nature of its activities in a field of finance hitherto inadequately covered, the work of the Corporation should become of increasing interest and importance. Owing to the specialised and distinctive character of its business, there should be no question of competition either with your bank or with other commercial banking institutions.

The policy of the Corporation will be to develop its business gradually on lines likely to promote the economic well-being of the various communities. It will welcome any suitable opportunities which may arise to co-operate with the appropriate Government Departments in the furtherance of development schemes which the authorities may desire to encourage.

Personal

NEW Year week-end. Come and join informal house party. Young professional and service people. Surrey manor house. 'Ph.: Frensham 74, or write Box A1628.

COUNTRY accommodation wanted. Week-ends, holidays. Private Travel Service wants extend accommodation list. Individual guests and parties. Box A2724.

INFORMATION required regarding Miss Lilly Winter, last known address Antonina Dvoraka 6, Brno, Czechoslovakia (May, 1941). Please communicate with R. W. Alcock, Westholme Farm, North Kelsey, Lincoln.

FEDERAL Union, a membership organisation which has worked since 1938 for World Federation, needs your support. Write to the Secretary, Federal Union, 8 Churton Street, London, S.W.1.

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Personal—continued

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